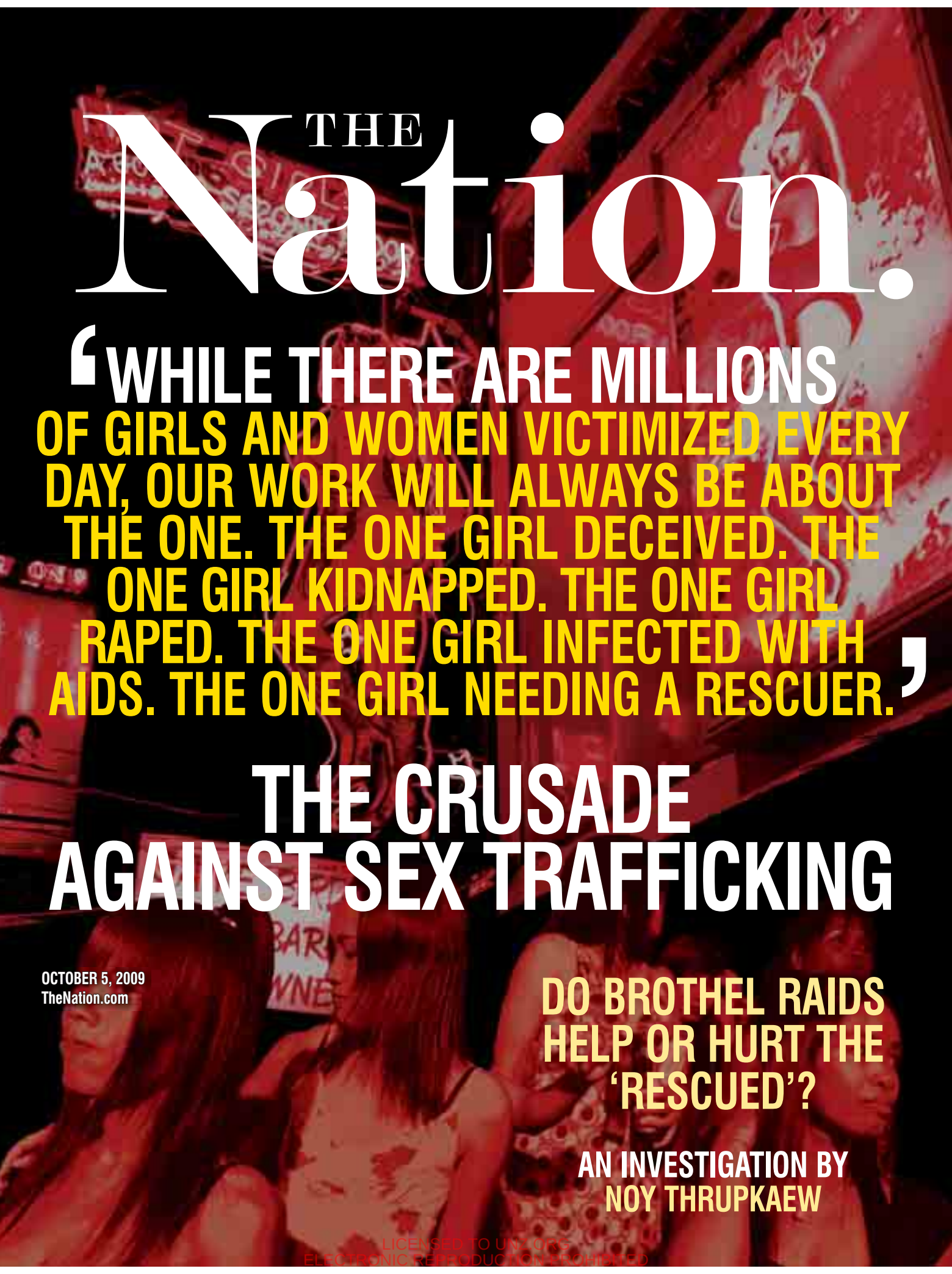

THE Nation.

‘WHILE THERE ARE MILLIONS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN VICTIMIZED EVERY DAY, OUR WORK WILL ALWAYS BE ABOUT THE ONE. THE ONE GIRL DECEIVED. THE ONE GIRL KIDNAPPED. THE ONE GIRL RAPED. THE ONE GIRL INFECTED WITH AIDS. THE ONE GIRL NEEDING A RESCUER.’

THE CRUSADE AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING

OCTOBER 5, 2009
TheNation.com

DO BROTHEL RAIDS HELP OR HURT THE ‘RESCUED’?

AN INVESTIGATION BY
NOY THRUPKAEW

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THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON KNOWING

Letters

¡Viva Honduras!

NASHUA, N.H.

In "Battle for Honduras—and the Region" [Aug. 31/Sept. 7], Greg Grandin free-falls into the booby trap of top-down coverage by giving voice solely to the Michelettis, Clintons, Zelayas and Otto Reichs of this conflict—albeit with an anti-imperialist's pen. Grandin's single mention of the Honduran resistance comes as an afterthought and does not capture the vibrant, massive, multidimensional cultural uprising on the day the rightful president was ousted.

I flew to Tegucigalpa with a human rights delegation after the coup, where we witnessed the burgeoning of a movement of hundreds of thousands of *hondureños*, which continues to this day. The resistance manifests itself in community journalism, acts of civil disobedience, mass demonstrations and countless gestures of solidarity on top of artistic expressions, so central to Latin American liberation movements. Grandin rightly points out the threat of the coup to the stability of the region. If we oppose it, we must support the resistance: as witnesses, financiers and organizers. We've formed the Committee in Solidarity With the Honduran Resistance and have organized activities, pickets, demonstrations and cultural nights—with the intent of raising awareness of the coup and funds for the folks in the streets. The IMF has bucked the international community by extending a $164 million loan to the illegal regime (which dwarfs the $3,000 our committee has raised). Our work will continue until constitutional order is restored. ¡Viva Honduras!

Send donations to the National Front Against the Coup at: Proyecto Hondureño/CESREH, Box 6095, Chelsea, MA 02150.

SIMON RIOS

Grandin Replies

NEW YORK CITY

I agree with Simon Rios that heroic resistance on the part of unionists, progressive church people, peasants, students and gay, lesbian and women's rights activists has been more effective in preventing the consolidation of the coup in Honduras than has international pressure. Their actions—which include a call to boycott scheduled November 29 presidential elections—have finally forced Washington to join the rest of Latin America and announce that it will not recognize the result of that vote. The Honduran regime is desperate, threatening to prosecute anyone who abstains from casting a ballot (voting is technically mandatory in Honduras, but in the past it was not enforced). Also disturbing is that the coup government has just revoked the citizenship of Catholic priest Andres Tamayo, whom *Nation* readers may know as a 2005 Goldman Environmental Prize recipient. Born in El Salvador, Tamayo is a naturalized Honduran who has been in the country since 1983, working with peasants in their fight to defend their land against commercial logging. The coup government justifies the revocation of citizenship on the grounds that the priest has supported the election boycott and has participated in protests demanding the restoration of democracy.

GREG GRANDIN

Premature Antifascists Unite!

ATLANTA

Dan Kaufman, in "La Despedida" [Aug. 31/Sept. 7] claims that "after the war, the Lincoln [Brigade] veterans were labeled 'premature antifascists' by the US military and Hoover's FBI." John Haynes and I published an article several years ago indicating that there is not one shred of evidence to support this claim. No veteran or any of their supporters has been able to produce a single document to buttress the claim. In fact, the evidence strongly suggests that it was the veterans themselves who sardonically appropriated the term "premature antifascists."

HARVEY KLEHR

letters@thenation.com

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The Nation.
since 1865

When Money Talks

Since the rise of modern corporations a century ago, Congress has restricted their participation in political campaigns, recognizing the potential for vast corporate treasuries to drown out the voices of citizens. Since 1947, federal law has prohibited corporations (and unions) from using their general treasury funds for campaign contributions or expenditures. But the Supreme Court now threatens to upend that tradition. Ironically, it seems poised to usher laissez-faire into the marketplace of ideas just as we have seen the bankruptcy of that theory in the capital markets.

EDITORIAL

Last term the Court took the unusual step of ordering re-argument in a narrow and technical case. *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* asked only whether the FEC could bar a nonprofit corporation from distributing, via on-demand cable TV, *Hillary*, a film critical of Hillary Clinton, during the 2008 presidential primary. After the case was argued, the Court on its own initiative raised the stakes dramatically by requesting further briefing and argument on a much broader question—whether it should overrule two prior decisions upholding Congress's power to restrict corporate speech in political campaigns. If it does so, it will leave the voting process even more vulnerable to capture by the wealthy and powerful.

One of the precedents under consideration, *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* (1990), is significant chiefly for its recognition that government has a "compelling interest" in counteracting "the corrosive and distorting effects of immense aggregations of wealth that are accumulated with the help of the corporate form and that have little or no correlation to the public's support for the corporation's political ideas." Citizens United has set its sights on overturning the principle. Its suit has been joined by the ACLU and esteemed lawyer Floyd Abrams. While this is an issue reasonable progressives can disagree on, we believe Abrams and the First Amendment advocates at the ACLU are confusing the speech of a corporation with that of living, breathing citizens.

Austin, which should be reaffirmed, simply acknowledged that without regulation, wealth threatens to dominate electoral politics. When *Austin* was decided, Congress had been regulating for-profit corporate campaign spending on that principle since 1907, and the Court had never struck down its efforts. Federal law allows corporations to speak in the context of campaigns, but requires that they finance such efforts through political action committees, whose voluntarily contributed funds reflect the persuasiveness of their ideas, rather than through general revenues, which reflect only the success of their businesses.

The most sensible way to resolve *Citizens United* would be to hold that election law cannot be applied to projects like *Hillary*, which was undertaken by a nonprofit and funded overwhelmingly by noncorporate funds. That would respect precedent and tradition, and resolve the case on narrow grounds consistent with the "judicial restraint" approach that Chief Justice John Roberts claimed he was committed to during his confirmation hearings.

But if that's what the Court wanted to do, it would not have needed to call for re-argument. Instead, the Court's five conservative justices seem poised to elevate laissez-faire to a constitutional principle in the political marketplace and unleash corporate treasuries on an electoral system already deeply biased toward the wealthy. The Court should step back from the precipice.

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This week at TheNation.com

News & Analysis

Jeremy Scahill: The death of Adam Hermanson

Dave Zirin & Sherry Wolf: Stop the sports sex scare

Tess Elliott: Scientific integrity lost on America's parks

Slide Show: Race in the Obama era

Poll: The ongoing media attention on Joe Wilson's outburst is...?

Blogs: US-Iran talks start October 1

Calendar: Post your event

Web letters: Express yourself!

The World and Pittsburgh

Perhaps it's time to update the slogan that evolved from the 1999 Seattle protests against corporate globalization: "Another World Is Possible." One year into a financial crisis that has seen governments—especially that of the United States—emerge as guarantors against risk for investors while remaining lax regulators of speculation and CEO greed, it has become all too evident that "Another World Is Necessary."

COMMENT

That slogan would sum up the urgency of the calls for change that will be sounded during the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh, on September 24–25, of leaders of nineteen wealthy nations and the European Union. Presidents and prime ministers will arrive with a sense of that urgency; they know that Nobel Prize–winning economist Joseph Stiglitz is right when he says the world economy is "far from being out of the woods." But activists are determined to use Pittsburgh's streets, campuses, churches and union halls to demand a paradigm-shifting response to the crisis, one that recognizes that the neoliberal policies that got us into this mess are not going to get us out of it.

A muscular letter to President Obama—signed by more than fifty groups, including the Change to Win labor federation, Friends of the Earth, Public Citizen, USAction and religious groups—argues that "remedying the current crisis, avoiding future crises and achieving economic justice and stability will require a new approach to domestic and global economic governance." For instance, the letter notes, G-20 moves to establish new financial-sector regulation "must also include revisions to the WTO's 1999 Financial Service Agreement, which exports worldwide the extreme financial service deregulation that is a cause of this crisis." New, more robust approaches are also needed to stimulate economies, promote sustainable development, address poverty and tackle global warming.

The leaders of the world's largest economies have failed to address the pathologies created by deregulation that rewards banksters and burdens consumers; free trade that favors multinational corporations over workers and communities; and gradualist responses to extreme poverty and climate change. Frustration with these failures was summed up by United Steelworkers president Leo Gerard when he declared that "right now [the G-20] stands for chaos, and it stands for economic destruction." Steelworkers, headquartered in Pittsburgh, will host pre-summit forums, rallies and concerts highlighting anger at failed economic policies and (with the Alliance for Climate Protection, activist State Senator Jim Ferlo and possibly Al Gore) the need for government investment in green jobs.

Obama's pre-summit rhetoric was appealing, especially his idea that the Pittsburgh gathering can launch a "global race to the top" to replace the race-to-the-bottom policies that have so widened the gap between rich and poor. But Stiglitz observes that "the administration seems very reluctant to do what is necessary" to regulate "too big to fail" banks and corporations. Indeed, within the G-20, Germany and France have far more aggressively pushed proposals to regulate CEO compensation and require greater corporate responsibility. Differences between

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Noted.

OSLO ACCORDS: To hear critics of healthcare reform tell it, the whole world hates "socialized medicine." So, presumably, Norwegians should have leapt at the opportunity to remove the yoke of government oppression from their overly taxed shoulders when conservative parties proposed partial privatization of the country's healthcare system. Right? Wrong. In the country's September 14 election Norwegian voters opted to continue striving toward the "social-democratic paradise" talked up by Prime Minister **Jens Stoltenberg**, whose left-leaning coalition surged at the close of a campaign that became a test of the country's commitment to liberal values and state-run healthcare and pension programs. Stoltenberg, the first Norwegian leader to win re-election in almost two decades, accepted his mandate "to renew, strengthen and improve the Norwegian social welfare state." Suggested headline for US media: SOCIALIZED MEDICINE PROVES POPULAR. JOHN NICHOLS

LUCRATIVE LIES: South Carolina Congressman **Joe Wilson**'s infamous outburst during President Obama's healthcare speech may not have endeared him to his Democratic colleagues, who voted overwhelmingly on September 15 to reprimand him, but it (and the left blogosphere campaign against him) has made him a cause célèbre of the right wing. As **Michael Kinsley** noted in the *Washington Post*, "The more times he is required to write 'I will not call the President a liar' on a special blackboard set up in the well of the House, the bigger hero he will become to a large chunk of the population."

At press time, Wilson has raised more than $1.7 million since September 9—$750,000 of which came in within forty-eight hours of his eruption—outstripping the nearly $1.2 million he raised for his entire 2008 race. Wilson's Democratic rival, **Rob Miller**, hasn't fared too badly either. Since Obama's speech, his campaign has netted more than $1.5 million, in large part through a fundraising drive on **ActBlue.com**, whose members gave in hopes of "defeating the man who yelled 'liar' at Obama" or, as one donor put it, "retiring ass clown Joe Wilson."

Miller, a former marine, lost the 2008 Congressional contest to Wilson in a 55-45 percent split, having spent just $614,487, $220,000 of which came from his own pocket; so the incident as a whole has certainly helped to even the campaign-cash gap. Still, it's premature to conclude that Wilson's heckling will lead to a Miller victory in 2010.

"Folks are making Wilson a hero," says **Kevin Gray**, a civil rights organizer from South Carolina, who also noted that his state is "the ideological home of white supremacy in the country." Despite the Miller campaign's growing pocketbook, Gray believes that Wilson's constituents will continue to mobilize, making Miller's chances slim. "It won't be against Miller," he says. "It will be against Obama. The black guy." ELISABETH GARBER-PAUL

FRINGE FESTIVAL: On September 12 some 70,000 people participated in a **Taxpayer March on DC**. March coordinators called upon "thousands of local organizers and grassroots Americans" to take to the streets of Washington to protest "the out of control spending, the bailouts, the growth of big government and soaring deficits." Pretty straightforward economic conservatism, right?

So imagine my surprise when, having just arrived at the march, I saw a tall, thin, bearded fellow with a boonie cap jogging up Pennsylvania Avenue shouting, "White power!" A few people looked around awkwardly, not sure how to react, but mostly the crowd just moved along. Why wouldn't they when just a few paces down the road an elderly man was showing off his MCCARTHY WAS RIGHT! sign, or when numerous placards compared the president to various genocidal tyrants, or when the most common mass-produced poster (courtesy of an antiabortion group) demanded that we BURY OBAMACARE WITH KENNEDY?

This was only a sampling of the hateful language on display at the rally, which was only tangentially about taxation. More accurately, the event was a **FreedomWorks**-organized, corporate-funded, **Fox News**–fueled celebration of every conservative political and cultural cause of the past fifty years. Moving around in the crowd, I found it impossible to miss the references to disparate issues, from blocking investigations of CIA torture to promoting assault weapons to God's "judging" America for homosexuality. Confederate flags were flown, Obama was told to "go back to Kenya" and so forth.

Up on the podium, speakers put a more positive spin on the gathering. One actually parroted a famous line from Barack Obama's stump speech, claiming the tea party was "not here to represent white America or black America. We're here for the United States of America." A more candid assessment came a few minutes later, however, when a singer took the stage and summed up the America pined for by those gathered at the base of the Capitol. She was a "proud Christian American," anti-Communist and Bible-believing. In fact, the most common rallying cry—beyond "You lie!" and "Can you hear me now?"—was that protesters wanted their country back, their Republic restored. A country, one could only assume, that resembled the almost exclusively white crowd. SEBASTIAN JONES

HONORING HERMAN: A longtime contributor to this magazine on the Supreme Court and constitutional issues, **Herman Schwartz** has been honored by Israel's legal and civil rights community. Twenty-five years ago Schwartz, a professor at the **American University Washington College of Law**, founded the **US-Israel Civil Liberties Law Program**, now a joint venture of WCL and the **New Israel Fund**. The twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in Tel Aviv this summer included the presentation of the first annual **Herman Schwartz Human Rights Award**. Those selected for the program spend a year at WCL studying civil rights and interning with US civil and human rights organizations, and another year working with a public interest group in Israel. Graduates of the program have held high positions with Israeli human rights organizations, become leading criminal defense attorneys or founded human rights organizations in Israel's Palestinian community. Schwartz told us, "The fellows in this program, Jews and Palestinians, have not only created a human rights bar and jurisprudence but they've also fostered a sensitivity to human rights that just didn't exist before."

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European and American business models certainly underpin some of the transatlantic wrangling. Still, it's remarkable that it is French President Nicolas Sarkozy—no lefty—who promises a walkout in Pittsburgh if there is no agreement to curb bankers' bonuses. He says he'll fight to get world leaders to explore alternatives to the "cult of the market," including creating indexes of well-being and of the "quality of public service."

Demands for a leap from the rhetoric of change to the reality are generating street heat, which is being turned up by global justice groups, the United Electrical Workers Union and community organizations ranging from the Thomas Merton Center to 3 Rivers Climate Convergence. Unfortunately, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and his aides, in their determination to promote their city as a global economic center, have imposed restrictions on dissent so wide-ranging that peace activist Cecilia Wheeler had to remind an early September city council meeting, "We are not terrorists…. We're the good apples here. We want [global leaders] to see overall that this is a small town with values, that welcomes everyone, that discriminates against no one."

Roughly 4,000 police and new rules to detain protesters have not made dissenters feel welcome. So many requests for permits to march, rally and set up camps in city parks have been stalled or denied that on September 11 the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania filed suit alleging that city, state and federal authorities had conspired to deny the demonstrators' free-speech rights by keeping them out of earshot of the G-20 summiteers. "All we are asking for is a safe place near the convention center so that the leaders inside can hear the people's voices," says Pete Shell, an antiwar organizer with the Merton Center.

Actually, activists are asking for a lot more. And rightly so. Changes in global governance that shake the grip of bankers and CEOs, even changes in the way leaders think about global governance, don't begin inside the cloistered gatherings of the G-20 or the WTO. They take shape outside, in the streets, where the victims of the race to the bottom have a right and a responsibility to declare that Another World Is Necessary. JOHN NICHOLS

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

A Year Later, Little Change on Wall Street

—*Headline in the* New York Times

Derivatives are with us still,
Unregulated. All concede
That Congress doesn't have the will
To curb a system based on greed.

So once again, the debt will grow,
Inflated salaries will soar.
Collapse? So what? The Gekkos know
We'd simply bail them out once more.

Hold Ashcroft Accountable

COMMENT

Shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks, then–Attorney General John Ashcroft announced a "paradigm of prevention," by which the Justice Department would aggressively use federal law to take "suspected terrorists" off the streets. As he later admitted in his book *Never Again*, however, Ashcroft and those he oversaw had no idea where the next terrorist threat might lie. So the government locked up more than 5,000 foreign nationals in anti-terrorism preventive detention in the first two years after 9/11—not one of whom stands convicted of a terrorist offense today.

Most were locked up using immigration law. But when the government suspected a US citizen, immigration law was no help. So the Ashcroft Justice Department turned to the "material witness" law, which applies to citizens, and twisted it for ends it was never designed to serve—to lock up people "for investigation" even where the government lacked probable cause to believe they had engaged in criminal activity.

Abdullah al-Kidd was one of the many locked up under this law. A US citizen born in Wichita and once a star running back for the University of Idaho, al-Kidd was arrested as a material witness in 2003 and spent more than a year living under strict, parole-like conditions. He was never called to testify in any proceeding. Like many others, he was never charged with criminal conduct. He was a victim of Ashcroft's "paradigm of prevention."

Al-Kidd sued, and in September the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco ruled that Ashcroft could be held personally responsible for this policy. This is a landmark decision for two reasons: it declares a central aspect of Ashcroft's policy clearly illegal, and it insists that accountability extends to those who authorize illegal policies, not just to the foot soldiers who carry them out.

Al-Kidd was subjected to an FBI investigation after 9/11; he was, after all, a Muslim. But the FBI found no evidence that he had engaged in criminal activity. That should have been the end of the matter. But when al-Kidd decided to go to Saudi Arabia in 2003 to study Arabic and Islamic law, he again aroused the government's suspicions.

So it turned to the material witness law, which allows for the imprisonment of a witness when it can be established that the witness's testimony is relevant to a criminal investigation or trial and that the witness is likely to flee if subpoenaed. Properly used, the law has a legitimate purpose; but it is vulnerable to being abused as a ruse for detaining people for whom the government lacks probable cause of criminal activity. Under Ashcroft, that abuse became official Justice Department policy. Al-Kidd was arrested purportedly in connection with the criminal trial of Sami al-Hussayen, a University of Idaho student prosecuted by the government for allegedly providing material support to ter-

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Reading Noam Chomsky may be enlightening, but *seeing* him can be electrifying. His provocative speech in Harlem recently brought 2,000 activists, journalists, professors, college students (and an unknown number of incognito politicians) cheering to their feet – though a few simply gasped and remained seated.

Has Chomsky changed his mind since the election? ■ Is Barack Obama a force for progress or the biggest bait-and-switch in US History? ■ What 3 terrible blunders is the left poised to make in the next 3 months? ■ Why do the ballyhooed signs of economic recovery actually signal big trouble ahead? ■ Can we indict Dick Cheney for war crimes?

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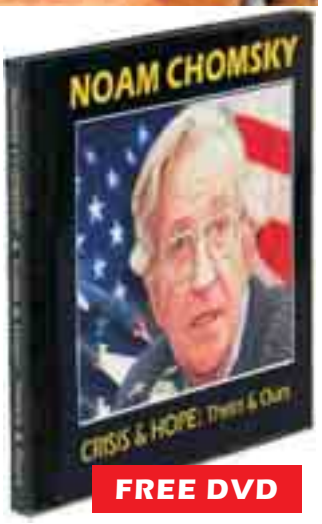

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rorists by running a website with links to other websites featuring jihadist rhetoric. Al-Hussayen was acquitted of those charges. Al-Kidd was never called to testify in that trial or any other.

When al-Kidd sued Ashcroft, Ashcroft argued that the case should be dismissed at the outset. He maintained that he'd played no personal role in al-Kidd's detention; that the law against using material-witness authority for investigative purposes was not sufficiently clear; and that he should be immune under a doctrine that guards prosecutors from civil suits for their prosecutorial decisions.

The court of appeals, in a decision written by a George W. Bush nominee, rejected all of these arguments. It declared that Ashcroft could be held responsible for injuries inflicted pursuant to his stated policy of using the material witness law to round up suspected terrorists. And it ruled that exploiting the law to lock up suspects for investigative or preventive purposes when probable cause of criminal activity is lacking is clearly unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment.

The decision is significant not only for al-Kidd but for all who might be deemed "suspicious" after a future terrorist attack. It puts government officials on notice that "preventive" measures must respect fundamental constitutional guarantees, and that when they do not, accountability will go to the top. Those are lessons that could profitably be applied more broadly, especially to those who authorized torture, as we begin to account for the wrongs committed in the name of the "war on terror."

DAVID COLE

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The African Airlift

Nairobi

Of all the African leaders of the 1960s independence era, none was more appealing than Tom Mboya. When he visited American colleges, Mboya generated rock-star adulation, and he counted Martin Luther King Jr. and Harry Belafonte among his admirers. Mboya was assassinated in 1969, but he left behind a remarkable legacy that is the subject of a just-published book, *Airlift to America*. It tells the story of how Mboya and a handful of Americans helped bring nearly 800 African students, mainly from Kenya, to the United States to attend college fifty years ago. The "airlift," as it became known, not only helped Kenyans prepare to take over from British colonial officials but also, as Tom Shachtman, the author, reveals, it had an effect—probably small, but possibly critical—on the 1960 US presidential election.

COMMENT

The Kenyan airlift veterans are a remarkable group. They include Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, who attended Mount St. Scholastica College in Kansas; Kenya's best-known columnist, Philip Ochieng, who received his BA from Roosevelt University in Chicago; and Perez Olindo, the first African head of Kenya's national parks, who studied at Central Missouri State. President Obama's father was not technically part of the airlift, since he had private funding for his travel to the University of Hawaii, but he and other African students who went to the United States at that time were regarded as members of the "airlift generation." Owino Okong'o, an airlift student who went on to become a professor of medical physiology, later described the airlift as having "transformed the elite culture of Kenyans from the British model to the American model in which performance is more important than where you went to school."

Although this history is well known, at least in Kenya, what's not been fully examined until *Airlift to America* is the role the airlift played in US politics. The 1960 Kennedy-Nixon campaign, in which Nixon enjoyed substantial African-American support, coincided with the second year of the airlift—and with frantic efforts by Mboya and some Americans (among them Cora Weiss, who has preserved the archives of the African American Students Foundation, on which *Airlift* is based) to raise money to charter enough planes to accommodate all the students who had obtained scholarships. After their funding requests to the State Department and several foundations were rebuffed, Mboya made a personal appeal to John Kennedy, to whom he'd been introduced by mutual friends. Kennedy promised a small donation from the Kennedy Family Foundation on the spot, and later the foundation agreed to cover the entire $100,000 cost of the flights.

The Kennedys made no announcement of their gift, but someone leaked it to the Nixon campaign, which pushed the State Department to reverse itself and fund the airlift. State did so, but the airlift organizers decided to stick with the Kennedy offer. Meanwhile, on the Senate floor, GOP Senator Hugh Scott blasted Kennedy for "an apparent misuse of tax-exempt foundation money for blatant political purposes"—charges that, to the GOP's chagrin, brought widespread support for Kennedy's action and an enormous amount of publicity to the airlift.

Airlift doesn't go as far as to claim that the incident made all the difference in the November election. But Shachtman does argue that the airlift "was equally if not more crucial" in Kennedy's razor-thin victories in several key states with significant African-American voting strength than the often-cited phone call Kennedy made to Coretta Scott King after her husband was arrested and a subsequent call Robert Kennedy made to the judge in the case.

Reading *Airlift* while Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was visiting Africa recently, I couldn't help reflecting on how history might have been different if Mboya and Kennedy had lived. Perhaps Mboya would have helped Kenya build on the idealism of the airlift generation, serving as an example to the continent and sending the country down a different path from the one that almost led to civil war in 2007–08. And maybe Kennedy would have come to view Africa as full of talented go-getters rather than as a white man's burden inherited from the colonialists—an attitude that seems to underlie much of US policy even today. Whatever the case, *Airlift* offers an intriguing tidbit of US history and a look back at a brief moment when many Americans and Africans caught glimpses of a shared and hopeful future. KAREN ROTHMYER

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Alexander Cockburn

Welcome to the National Asylum

Was there ever a society so saturated with lunacy as ours? One expects modulated nuttiness from the better element, particularly those inhabiting the corporate and legislative spheres. But these days insanity is pervasive, spreading through all classes and walks of life. For years we have been treated to pinstriped fugitives from the asylum like Pete Peterson urging the nation into ruin by slashing the deficit; but on September 12 in Washington by tens of thousands were the sans-culottes screaming for fiscal propriety as though channeling the ruinous orthodoxies of Montagu Norman or Andrew Mellon. Many among these Glenn Beck legions were surely one stroke or tumor away from financial ruin yet were still ready to tear any advocates of publicly funded health insurance into tiny pieces as though they were hawking *The Communist Manifesto* at a revival meeting. Inspiring, was it not, to see such self-abnegation on the part of so many people prepared to die in the name of free enterprise!

Many of the Glenn Beckers are "birthers" too, making delusional forays into the supposedly dubious documentation of Barack Obama's delivery in a hospital in Hawaii. Sometimes I think the White House should knock these surmises on the head by releasing all relevant documents and testimonies. But of course this would merely throw napalm on the flames. Once, when writing some caustic remarks about the occupants of another ward in the national asylum, the 9/11 Truthers, I suggested that the "missing people" on the plane that hit the Pentagon had been kidnapped at an earlier stage in the operation and flown to an air base in Louisiana—the very same air base where George Bush briefly touched down in his erratic flight from Florida on September 11, 2001. George Bush then personally executed the captives.

It was a satirical sally. But I swiftly received serious letters from people vexed by the lack of detail. Where had Bush shot them? With what type of weapon? A summary burst from a machine gun? Or a .22 bullet behind the ear?

For all too many on the left, the so-called 9/11 conspiracy remains the magic key. If it can be turned, then history at its present impasse will be unlocked and we can move on. For those on the racist right, aghast at the reality of a black man (actually half-white, half-black) in the White House, the magic key to reversing this unpleasing development is Obama's allegedly fake Hawaiian birth certificate. Their suppositions and claims shift, but the essence is always the same: he's alien. He has no right to be president. And as with the Truthers, the provision of evidence rebutting their claims is merely fuel piled on the bonfire of their insanity.

Now move from the nuttiness of his detractors to the madness of Great Ones, in this case President Obama. His rhetoric is decorous, but the delusions are just as ripe and far more lethal than those of the Glenn Beck demonstrators under his window. How is one supposed to rate the rationality of a person who wins the White House in large measure because of popular outrage at the disastrous war in Iraq and who then instantly ratchets up another war in Afghanistan—an enterprise for whose utter futility history both ancient and modern offers copious testimonies?

From time to time one meets a madman in a shopping mall or at a bus stop who approaches one with discreet confidences about his mother, the queen of England, or about the messages beamed through the fillings in his teeth that warn him of CIA surveillance from the plane flying 30,000 feet above his head. It's an effort of will to remind oneself that this is a person in disheveled mental condition and that it would be unwise to be drawn into protracted discussion of royal lineage tracked through the Almanach de Gotha, or to peer into jaws suddenly opened for one's inspection. Similarly, with Obama, he advances ridiculous propositions with nutty aplomb, as when he claimed in his speech to Congress on September 9 that his healthcare plan was deficit-neutral. Why does he expose himself thus to well-merited derision? Is it that Obama simply cannot bear to displease anyone—unless they are in faraway places like Afghanistan?

Indeed, the president reached the apex of lunatic effrontery when he caused the assembled legislators to leap to their feet in stormy applause by pledging that "I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits." This is the same president, these are the same legislators, who are committing billions in red ink for the war in Afghanistan and the continued US presence in Iraq.

The 1970s are back, or so claims *People* magazine. I can see why. It's nostalgia for the last sane decade in American political life, when people assayed the state of the nation amid the embers of the '60s and of the Vietnam War and elected politicians who passed some admirable laws. It seemed America might totter into the warm sunlight of sanity. It was Ronald Reagan who truly credentialed nutdom, setting the national thermostat at max degrees F, for Fantasy. The Republican Party is now entirely populated by mad people. Walk through the Congress and watch them babble and throw excrement at the walls. Then survey the "good" inmates mustered in the Democratic aisles, led by a president who at least once in the last campaign invoked Reagan as a positive force. They're less rambunctious but just as lethal, perhaps more so, in their depredations.

People start to go collectively crazy when they know that all the exits from our present state into the world of constructive reason are locked. Just think—a president elected on a huge wave of popular hope, unable to twist a single arm in his own party; unlikely even to pass financial reform amid the greatest wave of public hatred of Wall Street since the '30s; trying to pass off as healthcare "reform" a gift to the insurance industry of 30 million new customers, to be required by law to pony up insurance premiums and then be cheated. Doesn't that make you crazy too? ■

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Katha Pollitt

Kristof's Challenge

Mukhtar Mai, a Pakistani woman raped by decree of village elders as payback for her brother's alleged courtship of a girl of a different caste. Mahabouba, an Ethiopian girl, purchased at 13 as a second wife by a 60-year-old man, ostracized by her family after she sustained a fistula in childbirth, leaving her incontinent and smelly. Srey Rath, a Cambodian teenager lured from rural poverty with promises of a restaurant job in Thailand, only to be sold into sex slavery in Malaysia, where she was raped, beaten, drugged and, after escaping and spending a year in prison as an illegal immigrant, sold back into a brothel—by a policeman. In the developing world, girls and women suffer because of their sex in the most horrific ways, and in the most commonplace as well: girl children get less medical care (even fewer vaccinations), less food and less attention than their brothers, with the result that in India, for example, the mortality rate for girls under 5 is up to 50 percent higher than for boys.

Full of vivid firsthand reporting, and packed with information—on maternal mortality, genital cutting, sex-selective abortion, dowry deaths, domestic violence, child marriage, honor murder—*Half the Sky*, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, calls passionately, even angrily, for a grand campaign: "In this century, the paramount moral challenge will be the struggle for gender equality in the developing world." Justice for women, they point out, is not only a matter of morality: when girls and women are healthy, educated, able to work and take part in public life, the whole society benefits.

Half the Sky has been criticized for using the culturally clueless rhetoric of "saving" and "rescuing" third world women, for scanting decades of indigenous activism and in general treating women's human rights as the personal discovery of the authors. There's some validity to these criticisms. But I've written my share of negative comments about Kristof's early *New York Times* columns on the subject, and I think he's come a long way since he gleefully described purchasing the freedom of teenage sex slaves, accused American feminists of indifference to childbirth injuries like fistula in Africa because childbirth was part of women's "traditional role" and touted evangelical Christians as the best thing that ever happened to African womanhood when they were successfully pressuring the Bush administration to defund reproductive-health programs in favor of religion-infused abstinence education. Kristof and WuDunn are careful to mention explicitly feminist Western NGOs like Equality Now, as well as local grassroots organizations. They emphasize the agency, indeed heroism, of even the most abused victims—Mukhtar Mai, for instance, took her rapists to court and used her legal settlement to start a girls' school.

In her generally positive *Times* review, philosopher Martha Nussbaum faults the authors for answering their own question, "Is Islam misogynistic?" with what amounts to a waffling "Not really, but sort of." However that may be, *Half the Sky* clearly shows that Islamic nations have no monopoly on misogyny: consider bride burning in Hindu India, genital cutting among both Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia, forced prostitution in Buddhist Southeast Asia and staggering rates of sex-selective abortion in China, India and South Korea. Those who think war is the way to liberate women had better have five or six new armies up their sleeve. And what about the West? The book underplays sexism here in the United States, which is portrayed as an egalitarian paradise where "discrimination is usually a matter of unequal pay"—oh, that—"or underfunded sports teams or unwanted touching from a boss." I wouldn't call the roughly 1,300 American women murdered annually by intimate partners, or the widespread incidence of unwanted pregnancy and childbearing, mere details. If women's equality is the great cause of our time—and I hope it is—we'll get further by acknowledging it as a challenge no country has yet fully met rather than by framing it as a Western crusade.

Indeed, it is where the goal of liberating women confronts US foreign policy that the book is weakest. Poverty is not the only cause of women's subjugation—look at Saudi Arabia—but it's a crucial factor. When America was poor we too had fistula and 14-year-old brides and street children. Where will the money come from to give millions of third world women—and men—education, healthcare, good government and so on? Probably not from US foreign aid, currently just 1 percent of the budget. And probably not from abandoning trade policies that protect US cotton and sugar at the expense of African farmers either. Kristof and WuDunn breeze past the West's role in creating and sustaining global inequality, as they do the matters of US wars and support for repressive governments. Instead, they offer heartwarmers in which small donations and inspired volunteers work miracles: a girl stays in school because Camfed gives her a uniform; a visit from Heifer International sends a girl to college, a $65 microloan from the Pakistani Kashf Foundation turns a battered wife into a respected partner. To be sure, these groups do good work, as do many others—CARE, Women for Women International—but individual philanthropy can go only so far.

Half the Sky makes such a strong case for gender justice, it demolishes so successfully the unthinking moral relativism that shrugs at atrocities, and it fills the reader's heart with so much sympathy and indignation that its modest prescriptions come as quite a letdown. What if, for example, instead of spending $650 billion annually on "defense," we were to build schools and clinics throughout the developing world—and keep them staffed and supplied? What if we dedicated ourselves to safe childbirth for everyone, and contraception, and electrification, and clean water and, sure, microloans—but not at the 30 percent interest rate typical today. If all that were to happen, before long we'd be living in a different, better world—for everyone. ■

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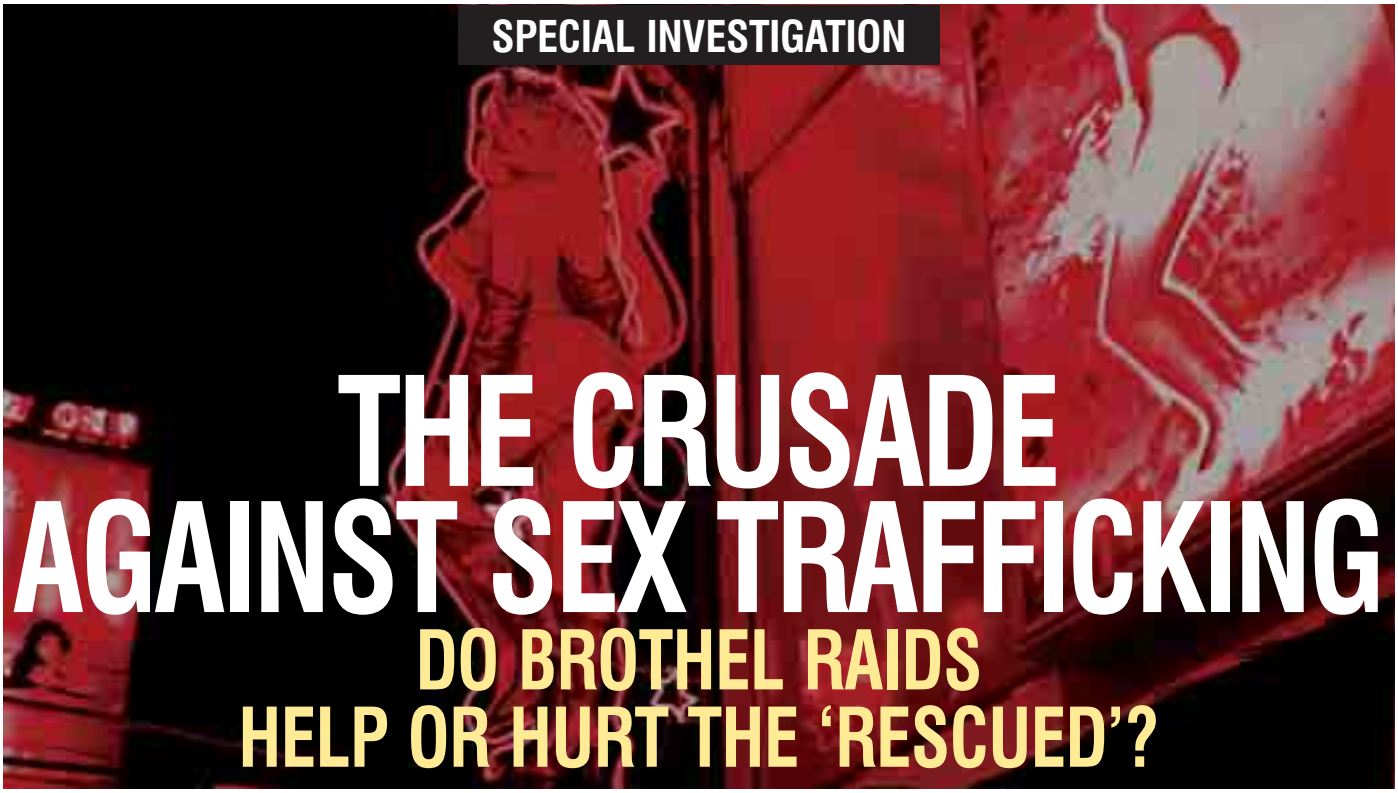

THE CRUSADE AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING

DO BROTHEL RAIDS HELP OR HURT THE 'RESCUED'?

by NOY THRUPKAEW

This article is the first part of a two-part series. The next installment will explore alternative approaches to addressing the problem of trafficking for the purposes of forced prostitution. —The Editors

Gary Haugen is cradling the padlocks in his thick hands. A former high school football player—bristly crew cut, broad shoulders squeezed into a dress shirt—Haugen has more the mien of a military man than a lawyer, although his image is in keeping with the muscular work of the organization he founded and heads. The president of the International Justice Mission, an evangelical Christian organization devoted to combating human rights abuses in the developing world, Haugen is musing over the mementos of IJM's work in India and Cambodia. The padlocks look ordinary enough: heavy brass, a squat square one, a round one with a key. But they had once hung on the doors of brothels, until local law enforcement busted the establishments in raids initiated by IJM.

"Have you been to Tuol Sleng?" Haugen asks, looking down at the padlocks. He is speaking of the central Khmer Rouge detention center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, now a museum filled with photographs of the thousands who perished at the prison. "There it is—you see a factory where people got up every day and then went to work, and their job was to torture people as painfully and horribly as possible to extract a confession from them and then kill them.

"A lock on a brothel, for me, represents this element of violence and force," says Haugen. "The lock is on the outside of the door, not inside."

For Haugen, the locks are reminders of his calling: to break the chain of human rights abuses, one person at a time. He argues that the main problem facing the disenfranchised is not one of hunger, homelessness, lack of education or disease. Rather, the root cause of much of the suffering in the developing world is the failure of the criminal justice system to protect the poor from violence—the brutality that robs them of food, home, liberty and dignity.

In an effort to counter those failures, IJM marshals more than 300 Christian lawyers, law enforcement specialists and social workers who collaborate with local counterparts and police to provide services to victims of slave labor, sexual abuse, police brutality, illegal detention and land seizure. In the case of its best-known and most controversial work—brothel raids—IJM provides evidence of trafficking to police in countries including India, Cambodia, the Philippines and, in the past, Thailand; and it collaborates on "interventions" to remove victims from the establishments and arrest and prosecute their abusers. Although the raids have undoubtedly saved a number of trafficking victims from exploitation, human rights advocates have criticized the interventions for disrupting HIV-outreach efforts, heightening the potential for police brutality and subjecting adult sex workers and trafficking victims to possible deportation or long involuntary stays in shelters.

In light of the organization's tactics, Haugen's mention of Tuol Sleng is an uneasy one that points out the potential perils of IJM's approach—an example of state power used to prey on, rather than protect, its populace. Haugen acknowledges that law enforcement agents have often been the perpetrators of abuse, and he has testified against this police corruption in Congress.

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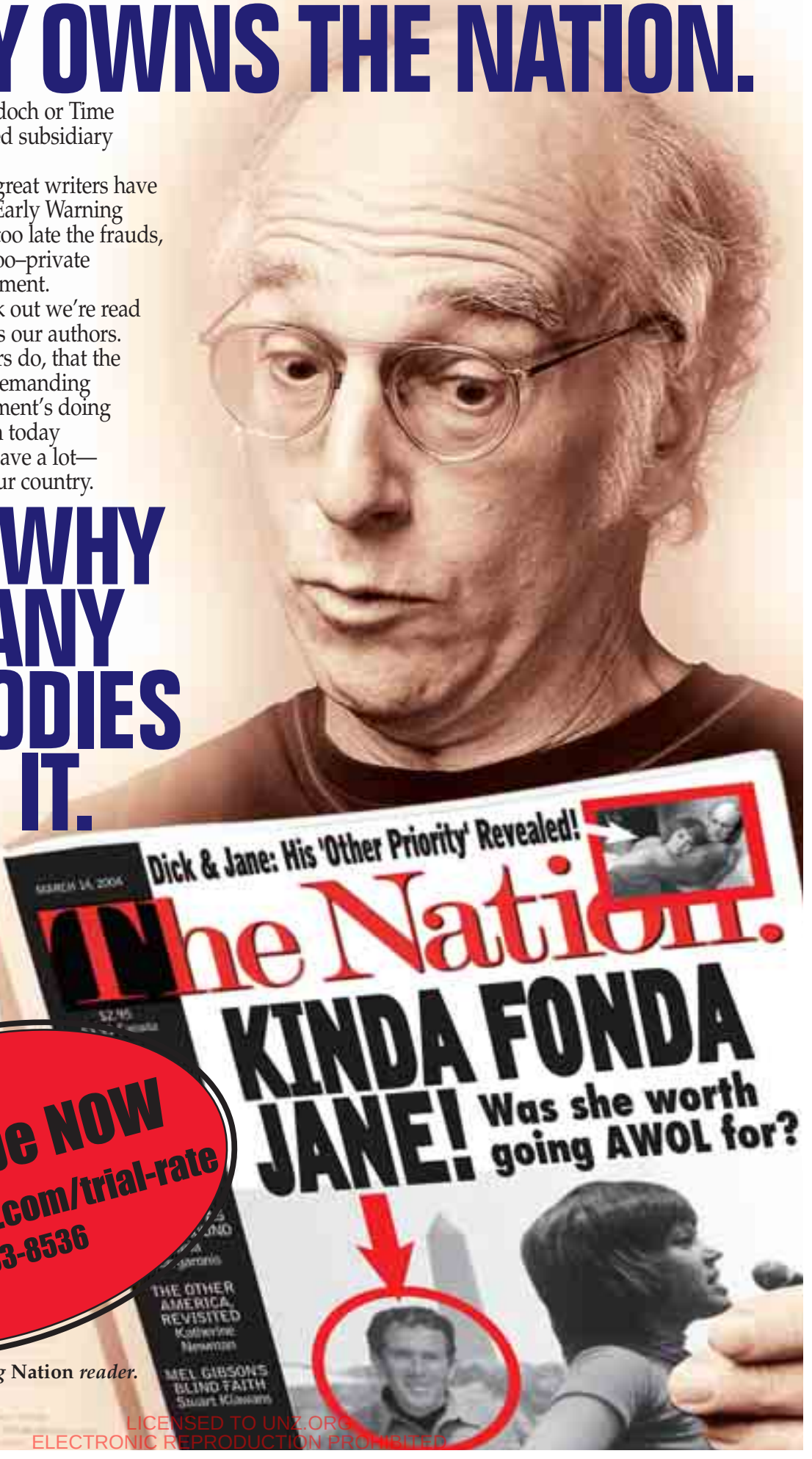
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Nonetheless, he has based his decision to work with local police on the premise that power can be harnessed to bring about justice—especially when tethered to divine aims. As Haugen writes in his book *Good News About Injustice*, "God is the ultimate power and authority in the universe, so justice occurs when power and authority is exercised in conformity with His standards."

This philosophy found deep resonance with the Bush administration. Eager to complement his war on terror with a parallel "soft-power strategy," according to his speechwriter Michael Gerson, President Bush signed on to the "war on trafficking" with a vengeance. Although countertrafficking funds found their way to groups that worked more broadly on immigrants' rights and services, much of the money went to organizations like IJM, whose interventionist attitude was congruent with Bush's foreign-policy stance, and to groups that believed that prostitution was inherently exploitative and deserving of abolishment.

Part of the appeal of the law-and-order solutions proposed by groups like IJM is that they are highly visible and forceful responses to the horrifying abuses faced by trafficking victims and sex workers—injury, extortion, rape, even murder. (*New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof tried a similarly dramatic tack when he went so far as to purchase the freedom of two trafficked girls, with decidedly mixed results.) The narrative that frames such vigorous interventions as the noblest response to the scourge of sex trafficking is an understandable one, but it skirts the economic and social problems that make recovery so difficult for the "rescued." It also rips their lives out of context, so that an approach that might be suitable, if still controversial, in a country with reliable law enforcement and criminal justice systems is applied in a country where those systems are more likely to be part of the problem than the solution. The Obama administration seems to be aware of these issues, but rolling back the momentum on raid work in order to scrutinize its efficacy is a tough challenge—especially when there is always another young victim to rescue.

In 1997 Haugen launched IJM to answer the biblical mandate to seek justice. As he writes, "Over time, having seen the suffering of the innocent.… More and more I find myself asking not, *Where is God?* But, *Where are God's people?*" Dedicated to a "casework" model, IJM staff work to remove victims from exploitation. IJM then prosecutes the abusers under local law and assists victims with "restoration" by winning them financial compensation or providing "aftercare" services through partner organizations.

IJM's casework approach focuses on individual rescue. As Haugen has written, "The good shepherd would leave the ninety-nine to go find the one lost sheep because the one mattered." Sharon Cohn Wu, IJM's senior vice president of justice operations, concurs. "While there are millions of girls and women victimized every day, our work will always be about the one," she said in a public address. "The one girl deceived. The one girl kidnapped. The one girl raped. The one girl infected with AIDS. The one girl needing a rescuer. To succumb to the enormity of the problem is to fail the one. And more is required of us."

Thousands of Christians have answered Cohn Wu's call, joining IJM campus chapters, attending Haugen's talks at the Saddleback and Willow Creek leadership conferences, and swelling the organization's budget to $22 million in 2008. IJM has become a major force in humanitarian work and an even larger one in burgeoning evangelical activism.

IJM's rise was fueled by the millions in federal grants it received under the Bush administration, which also expanded the federal law on trafficking. Before the Bush era, the law created a State Department office to rank—and potentially sanction—countries on the basis of their countertrafficking efforts in its annual "Trafficking in Persons" report. When the law was reauthorized under Bush, however, it included a clause to suspend funding to organizations that "promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution." Those applying for funds for HIV education or outreach were subject to the same clause.

Eager to complement his war on terror with a parallel 'soft-power strategy,' Bush signed on to the 'war on trafficking' with a vengeance.

President Bush then released anti-trafficking funds to feminist anti-prostitution groups and to faith-based organizations like IJM. The funding decision outraged HIV-education NGOs and sex workers' unions, a number of which were cut out of HIV-outreach and countertrafficking funding or refused it in protest. Human rights advocates, meanwhile, raised concerns that IJM's criminal justice approach would cause "collateral damage"—putting women and girls on a collision course with police brutality, detention and deportation, and disrupting HIV services while failing to address the economic inequities that would replace one rescued girl with another victim.

Those concerns fell on deaf ears. IJM began receiving federal funding in 2002, and by the end of 2010 the organization will have received more than $4 million from the government, including a $500,000 grant to open an office—established just last January—to work against trafficking for forced prostitution in Samar, the Philippines.

IJM's ardent sense of mission—its moral clarity about justice work, dedication to the individual and passionate desire to find relief for victims—brought a revitalized engagement to believers and those concerned about trafficking. But those qualities often led to a quagmire in IJM's early years. Although the organization has refined its techniques, its operations have ambiguous, and sometimes troubling, results on the ground.

As for IJM's symbolic quest to provide individual rescue, finding "the one" for whom the group toiled and whom IJM had "saved" would prove nearly impossible. She is a cipher, a reposi-

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tory of innocence and redemptive hope that seemed to call more loudly to the IJM staff than the voices of trafficking victims and sex workers who decried the raids and their experiences of police brutality. "The one" was a symbol that IJM staff would always be driven to break free, even if she would wind up running away from her rescuers in the end. The shepherd claimed to have benevolent aims but did not always know the way to safety.

Ping Pong is frowning, her formidable charm dampened by memory. The sex worker is mulling over IJM's work in Thailand. As a health and legal-services advocate with the sex-worker organization Empower, she's seen the aftereffects firsthand.

"Oh, yes, there were problems," she says at last. "The deportation—and back to Burma! They were desperate to leave in the first place. The long detention. The girls running away. And the way they treated other NGOs, just expecting them to clean up the mess afterward. Even the other anti-trafficking groups couldn't get along with them."

We are meeting in Empower's Chiang Mai offices, perched over the Can-Do Bar, an "experitainment" venue cooperatively owned by sex workers and managed in compliance with Thai labor laws. The bar is a cavernous space—front patio, full bar, pool table, fairy lights and two poles for dancing.

'The one' was a symbol that IJM staff would always be driven to break free, even if she would wind up running away from her rescuers.

IJM set up its Chiang Mai office in 2000, intent on tackling the northern city's trafficking and child-prostitution problems. Located near the Burmese border, Chiang Mai serves as the gateway to uncertain refuge for Burmese and ethnic Shan migrants seeking escape from a despotic regime, or fleeing the rape and plunder of a Burmese military determined to eradicate a Shan insurgency through the cruelest means possible. Thailand has thrived on the underground labor of these migrants, who often work the construction sites, wash the laundry and sell sex—largely without benefit of documentation or legal protections.

The group's early raids soon resulted in IJM being branded vigilante "cowboys" and "cops for Christ" by other humanitarian workers. The organization even busted the same brothel twice, in 2000 and 2003, each time calling local NGOs in a panic afterward to ask for translation help—no one had realized the frightened women and girls were Burmese and Shan.

In accordance with Thai laws, older, voluntary prostitutes caught in IJM raids were deported to the border, while younger ones, automatically defined as trafficking victims on the basis of their age, were moved to government rehabilitation centers, where they were often required to stay for months or years, waiting to testify in court and be repatriated directly to their families. As Thai law did not grant trafficking victims temporary legal documents at the time of IJM operations in country, the girls were not allowed to leave the shelter grounds. (The new law, passed last year, allows for the possibility of temporary residence for foreign trafficking victims, but it remains to be seen if this provision will be implemented.)

Rather than face a potentially long period of detention, some rescuees took matters into their own hands, knotting sheets together to escape shelters—one was hospitalized with back injuries when she fell during an escape attempt.

Ping Pong sighs, recalling the reaction of the women and girls rescued in an IJM raid in 2003. "They were so startled, and said, 'We don't need rescue. How can this be a rescue when we feel like we've been arrested?' All their possessions were taken away, they were photographed by the media and some of them couldn't leave for quite a long time. The women who get rounded up usually wind up back here and doing sex work again—but this time with more debt from having to make the journey or be retrafficked again.… We wrote a report critiquing the raid, but then IJM accused us of supporting brothel owners—so we never talked to IJM again." In a 2003 position paper, IJM had argued that Empower turned a "blind eye" to child prostitution by failing to report brothel owners they knew were practicing it "in order to further their work among adult commercial sex workers."

According to Empower staff member Liz Hilton, in the late '90s, before IJM began its work in Thailand and when police raids were at a high, brothel owners would occasionally drop off women and girls at the Empower office after learning of an impending raid. Empower staff would then assist the women in deciding what their next steps would be. Should the brothel remain open, they could return there to work. Others sought work elsewhere, returned home or entered shelter programs voluntarily. Hilton says, "After they were deposited on our doorstep, well, we eat first—it's Thailand!—and we see what everyone needs and wants." Hilton recalled two cases where girls under 18 were dropped off by brothel owners, and both were referred to shelters and services. According to Hilton, Empower made it clear to the brothel owners that "there was no guarantee that they'd be willing to go back" and that Empower had as its dictate "whatever the women want." Even so, "to be honest, sometimes the best interests of the women and what they want fits more closely with brothel owners than with the rescue organizations or police," says Hilton, meaning that sometimes the women wanted to continue working rather than face deportation or receive alternate vocational training. Still, the evacuation prompted by the threat of the raid did mean that some who wanted to leave got the chance to do so.

A number of trafficking victims from the 2003 raid initially refused to provide their real names and addresses in order to protect themselves and their families, according to Ping Pong. They were willing to stay in the shelter rather than face a return to impoverished villages and the shattering shame at the discovery of the nature of their work or the possibility of detention in Burma for their illegal exit from the country. Burmese officials are not above extorting the women's families, and Ping Pong recounted anecdotes of entire households being forced to move because village gossip broke out after Burmese officials came to

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Professor Timothy Taylor is Managing Editor of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* a quarterly academic journal produced at Macalester College and published by the American Economic Association. He received his master's in Economics from Stanford University. At Minnesota, he was Teacher of the Year for Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs master's degree students.

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locate the women's relatives in the repatriation process. The victims eventually relented and were repatriated—my efforts to find and speak directly with women and children recovered in IJM-initiated raids in Thailand were unsuccessful.

"IJM talks about saving an individual," says Joe Amon, director of the health and human rights division at Human Rights Watch. Amon met with the group in 2007 to discuss its tactics. "And what's incredible is that it's not clear if that individual has been saved. IJM is not clear on how aftercare leads to protection for these kids. I asked them about deportation of these girls. And they had no tracking for that, for any minors that had been repatriated. That to me is incredibly troubling."

'IJM talks about saving an individual, and what's incredible is that it's not clear if that individual has been saved.' —HRW's Joe Amon

Ben Svasti is the executive director of Trafcord, a Thai organization that provides liaison among social workers, police and lawyers on trafficking cases. Trafcord used to work closely with IJM—the group's undercover investigators would hand over evidence of trafficking to Trafcord, which would launch an inquiry and decide the best course of action.

"Half of those IJM cases didn't hold water," says Svasti. Part of the problem was that IJM had difficulty differentiating between voluntary sex workers and trafficked women and girls, a difficult task even for Trafcord. "IJM would go in and ask, Do you like working here?" says Svasti. "The girl says no, and then they'd assume she wanted to be rescued. But you very rarely get a woman who says, I like this kind of work."

Svasti links this problem with US policies that conflate trafficking and prostitution. "I remember talking to US officials who were confused that there could be voluntary prostitution," he says. "They thought, 'Why would we need to differentiate? It's all forced and largely the same as trafficking. If we come across it, we should shut it down.' If you think that sex work is one of the worst things that can happen to a person, then I guess you can say you are rescuing people to take them out of it."

Christa Crawford served as IJM's country director in Thailand in 2001 and '02, after which she worked for the United Nations and wrote a book on using international law to fight trafficking. As she explains it, American perceptions of trafficking led to policies centered on eradicating large-scale brothel prostitution, rescuing "an innocent pre-pubescent girl victim who has been kidnapped or tricked" and targeting traffickers who are part of international criminal rings. "That does exist. But the on-the-ground reality often consists of the big murky middle," says Crawford, referring to the family members, neighbors or formerly trafficked women who often pull others into prostitution.

"There were degrees of volition involved," Crawford continues. "Under international law the minors can't consent to prostitution, but it was important to understand what they were thinking. As for the women, they were making a rational decision under horrible conditions—to be raped for free in Burma or paid to do commercial sex work is one situation. For me, they are making a rational decision, but that's a decision no one should have to make. We should be talking about the labor laws, migration laws and the situation in Burma—just as much as working with the courts and police."

A high-ranking police officer at the provincial level agrees with Crawford's assessments. "The 'victims' we found intended to come and work in prostitution. That's the majority of the people we found, I would say 80 or 90 percent, back then when we were working with IJM, and now, too," he says, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I feel bad for the women—and they get so angry about what we're doing."

IJM harnessed US influence to pressure local NGOs and police to fall in line. In one IJM-initiated case, Trafcord's "slowness" in taking action on raiding a brothel earned it a rebuke from the State Department, according to Svasti, which raised diplomatic hackles in Thailand and in effect severed the relationship between IJM and Thai countertrafficking efforts.

Stymied by Thailand's inflexible laws on detention and deportation and shut out by Thai organizations, IJM gradually tapered off its countertrafficking work there; now it focuses on helping ethnic minorities file for legal citizenship. It shifted its countertrafficking efforts to the next battlefront—a neighboring country with an appetite for child prostitution, Cambodia.

Head north out of Phnom Penh on National Road 1 for eleven kilometers and turn left, and you'll find what was once Cambodia's most notorious haven for child prostitution. These days, visitors who come to Svay Pak during the day will find an open-air billiards area, a few drugstores and one or two gold shops that form part of an informal banking system for the poor and undocumented, who display the gold as a form of aspirational fashion or tuck it away for safekeeping. A few young men and women are cutting and stacking rags, and farther down, past a dusty marketplace full of the smell of overripe fruit and empty of customers, is a recycling outpost where a woman with a scarf wound around her head is at work crushing water bottles. Svay Pak is a town of scraps and remnants—including a diminished child-sex trade that lingers on, despite the efforts of IJM and the Cambodian police.

It's a melancholy ending to what was supposed to be a happily-ever-after story—after all, Svay Pak helped IJM make its name. The predominantly Vietnamese village was the staging ground for IJM's most celebrated raid, in March 2003, which became the subject of a *Dateline NBC* special and Haugen's book *Terrify No More*.

"They would bring the youngest of girls and sit them on your laps in the streets," said Patrick Stayton, who became IJM's field office director in 2007, after the first IJM raid. "There were girls that were anywhere from 5 to 8. After that [IJM raid] they no longer had to have every orifice of their body violated ten times a day.… That ended for at least a few that day."

I first met Stayton in February 2008. The tall lawyer had a deep, rolling voice—a natural fit for singing in a chorus, which he says serves as "one of my outlets"—and an intense gaze that

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radiated moral seriousness and genuine, if guarded, warmth.

He folded himself into a wicker chair, and we turned to his work, faith and the classic conflict that IJM had encountered: how to balance the needs of trafficked women and girls with the potential for disruption in the lives of adult sex workers and the distribution of HIV services.

"I believe that God is all-powerful. He could do this, but I think it pleases him to let his creations be his hands and feet here," he said. "I have an opportunity to bring heaven on earth in places that are already hell on earth. I believe in a God who created us with the ability to feel this kind of pain, and to understand and recognize and see it, a heart to want to do something about it. I think the evil that happens here breaks his heart.

"Am I happy about the potential disruption? No. But I'm looking at the girl there, the 15-year-old girl who is nothing more than an organ for rent," he says. "That's what we find unacceptable. And I think that IJM has weighed that cost—I have personally weighed that cost. I wouldn't be working with IJM if I didn't feel that cost was one I could take."

IJM was prepared to stake it all on its first major intervention in Cambodia. On March 29, 2003, it staged an ambitious and massively publicized raid. Haugen had agreed to embed a crew from *Dateline*, hoping that the TV segment would create enough public outrage to force Cambodian authorities to shut down the village, should the raid fail.

Posing as prospective clients, IJM investigators had amassed videotaped evidence that around forty girls, some as young as 8 or 9, were being offered for sexual services. After the raid, IJM was able to count thirty-seven girls among the rescued; the ensuing court case resulted in six convictions. I was unable to meet the girls rescued in the raid or any from subsequent interventions; shelter managers said they wanted to protect the girls from too much media exposure. But in August 2008 *Dateline* ran a follow-up story with the girls, who appeared healthy and happy, and had dreams of becoming doctors and dance teachers.

The Svay Pak raids seemed to close on that triumphant note—but the story after the redemptive ending is far darker, according to Peter Sainsbury, a consultant who worked with Cambodian human rights group LICADHO to review the IJM raid. A number of bystanders had been caught up in the intervention, including a noodle seller suffering from high blood pressure. Although Sainsbury notified IJM staff of her condition, little was done to earn her release or provide her with medical care, and she died in custody. Her body was returned to her family with teeth missing—prison guards had used pliers to wrench out any with gold fillings.

As for the children, a number of them were addicted to ketamine and injectable drugs, according to Sainsbury, and cut deals with police in the safe house in order to procure them. At least twelve of the victims ran away, some of them later reappearing at Svay Pak to continue prostitution, according to local sources. A police raid a year later netted a number of the rescuees from the high-profile March 2003 IJM raid. Within days of the later raid, all the girls had fled the shelter.

A USAID-funded "census" of sex workers in Cambodia uncovered the fact that the number of underage children offered for prostitution actually increased after the raid, from forty-six before to twelve directly after to fifty-five by May 7 of that year.

"We were a little surprised at the increase after the raid," said researcher Thomas Steinfatt by phone. "But a lot of the girls have a debt contract. If [a girl] winds up in a shelter after a raid, she wants to get out because her family will be pressured to pay back the debt. They won't be able to do that, so the 15-year-old [sister] may get sent. Then the 13-year-old may get sent as well. That's one way the larger number could be accounted for. I argue that the contracts should be null and void, but the girls and women are not going to see it that way."

Those who remained or returned to Svay Pak faced an additional challenge: according to Sainsbury, pimps believed that local HIV-education and social work NGOs had aided IJM and the police, and after the raids cut off the groups' access to the women and barred them from providing care.

In an effort to put a definitive end to child prostitution in Svay Pak, IJM raided the village multiple times after its initial intervention, and the Cambodian police also conducted 100-day saturation/surveillance operations. In his report on the impact of these initiatives, however, French economist Frederic Thomas discovered that the raids had merely dispersed the problem. The women and girls of Svay Pak who hadn't returned to Vietnam had been relocated to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, the town just outside the famous Angkor Wat ruins.

By 2007 business in Svay Pak had recovered and reappeared more covertly. Pimps would search clients for cameras, according to Interior Ministry and IJM sources, or use intermediaries like hotel staff and motorcycle-taxi drivers to help deliver children from the village directly to clients' hotel rooms.

Shortly after its first Svay Pak raid, IJM launched a police-training initiative in Cambodia that brought its own controversy. USAID awarded a nearly $1 million grant to the organization to train police in countertrafficking techniques—a decision that fueled criticism from human rights advocates concerned about corruption. Cambodian police are notorious for their involvement in trafficking, through extorting protection money from brothel owners, or through assault and rape of sex workers and trafficking victims.

According to a 2006 USAID-funded study that drew on interviews with 1,000 sex workers and sixty police officers, approximately a third of the freelance sex workers surveyed had been raped by a policeman in the past year; a third had been gang-raped by police. As for sex workers who worked in brothels but also accepted clients outside, 57 percent had been raped by a lone policeman; nearly half had been gang-raped by law enforcement. Fifty percent of freelancers and nearly 75 percent of the brothel group had been beaten by police in the past year.

The police themselves testified to their behavior:

> Frankly speaking, I did not like sex workers in the past. I have recently abused many hardheaded women who were working in the parks at nighttime. I beat them when they refused sex with me…. I can't remember the number of beatings. Because I thought that sex workers needed extreme sex from men [laughs]. People in my area called sex workers *pradap* (meaning "equipment that people can use for doing something," a

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public vagina for men). Sometimes I asked for some money from them to buy beer or wine…. Sometimes I f***ed them on the stone bench. I never paid them for sex…. There were many policemen who used to work in this park and they did the same…. Now I realized that women become sex workers because they have no job and no money to do business. I know that sex workers have suffered a lot from men, especially men who have guns and power like policemen. I am so sorry for what I have done to those sex workers. Maybe at that time I was too young to know everything in this society. About five years ago, I arrested one woman who was walking on the street late at night. I threatened her to give me some money. I needed money for buying beer and cigarettes. That woman told me that she had no money. I beat and forced her to find money for me. She took off her earring and sold it for money to buy wine for me. I raped her on the ground near Wat Phnom. I used a condom and I raped her three times. I beat her when she was crying for my mercy. [Respondent silent for a while.] I will never do it again. I did many wrong things in my life. I want POLICY [the project that performed the study] to train police about women's rights.… I want to be a good man and take care of my family.

Such stories, according to a US government official who works on anti-trafficking, speaking on condition of anonymity, raise serious questions about "whether or not working with police as allies on this issue was a good [policy] in Cambodia."

Indeed, the "war on trafficking" blew up in Cambodia last year. In the wake of US pressure on trafficking and the advent of a new countertrafficking law, the Cambodian government launched a campaign of indiscriminate sweeps of streets and brothels. Security forces harassed HIV-outreach workers, disrupting condom-distribution efforts, and caged sex workers and street people in detention centers—actions that drew criticism from UN agencies and other civil society groups.

Cambodian government officials responded with indignation. "It is not true police are using this law to arrest and extort money from the suspects," said Gen. Bith Kim Hong, head of the anti-trafficking police. "We never arrest prostitutes, but rather we save them from brothels."

According to LICADHO, the sweeps resulted in the murder of three detainees, who were beaten to death by prison guards, and the suicides of at least five others.

IJM did not help conduct the sweeps and condemned them publicly—Stayton even attempted to contact the local sex workers' collective to offer his help in investigating the allegations of abuse. He was rebuffed by silence, however—a representative of the collective argued that the sweeps were an unsurprising consequence of US pressure on trafficking, in which IJM has played a strong part, and of a policy that favors engagement with law enforcement while failing to heed the voices of those they ostensibly protect.

Some in the human rights community remain open to dialogue with IJM and to the possibility of positive collaboration with the police. Joe Amon of Human Rights Watch offered a slew of possible modifications to IJM's work, including establishing formal mechanisms like citizens' commissions and independent investigations to pursue complaints about police

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abuses. As for the sex workers, IJM could engage in "real dialogue with sex workers' groups, which have their own ways of gathering information and informing police they trust. They could also provide legal representation for adult sex workers, particularly those abused by police, or they could support local legal NGOs to do so." In the absence of those safeguards, Amon felt that IJM's strategies have yielded mixed results at best.

It's unclear how IJM may be addressing the potential complications of working with such volatile partners. The organization did not respond to repeated requests to speak on concrete strategies in the field to avoid or counter police corruption and brutality. IJM staff did, however, mention the protocol they had issued to local police, which advises them on ways to shield sex workers from the media and to reassure them they are not being arrested, and which explains techniques for conducting raids so they do not implicate social service NGOs operating in the area. My request to see the manual, however, resulted in no response. Asked about the provision of legal representation for adult sex workers, Haugen responded by noting that most of the women were undocumented and therefore less likely to press charges against law enforcement.

For Marielle Lindstrom, weighing the balance of IJM's work in Cambodia is a difficult task. Formerly chief of the Asia Foundation's anti-trafficking project, Lindstrom was in charge of disbursing the major USAID grant on the issue and served as main coordinator on Cambodia's anti-trafficking strategies, convening a task force of government officials, ministries and more than 200 NGOs. She acknowledges that IJM is "doing a good thing rescuing the children" and could have a strong positive effect should its training be incorporated into the national police academy, but she is torn about the overall impact of the organization's work.

"In the end," she says, "it's the way of thinking that troubles me. Do you want to make a difference in one person's life, or change the system? Many people are here because they've been called to do something, they have a calmness and a conviction. They know this is right. For me, I'm only human. I doubt myself all the time. I need to consider different approaches. I'd much rather say that God tells me to do this. It would be easier." Lindstrom sighs again. "Because what about your responsibility to a fellow human being, to what *they* want? Do we ever ask them? Some see proof of their faith in that one person they rescue. That's my concern—there's no self-doubt. It didn't cross anyone's mind to work with sex workers on the law, for example. And we talk about the minimum standards of assistance, but victims are not consulted in the creation of those standards."

Before I left Cambodia, I met with the secretariat of the sex workers' collective. Three of them had been trafficked—although I didn't ask for details, they provided them, their stories of deception by friends and family.

At the end of our conversation, I asked if they had any questions. They had only one. "Sister," Preung Pany said, "we tell our stories to so many journalists, so many people like you, but then nothing changes. Still we are raped by the police, still there are young ones in the brothels. There are so many people working on this—the rescuers, the HIV people, people like you—and so much money going into this problem. But why doesn't anything change?" ■

Repairing Our Broken Justice System

We need a Supreme Court that is empathetic to those who have been marginalized.

by GARA LaMARCHE

Since the levees burst in New Orleans and the interstate bridge collapsed in Minnesota, much has been written and said about the need to repair the nation's infrastructure, too much of which is frayed and crumbling because of years of underinvestment. This transpired while tax cut after tax cut went to the wealthiest in our society, and billions were squandered on wars of choice and high-tech weaponry. This neglect of infrastructure resulted in bodies littering the banks of the Mississippi on the Gulf Coast and floating in the wreckage of a highway a thousand miles upriver.

KAREN CALDICOTT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (*aka* the stimulus bill), passed earlier this year, has begun the process of rebuilding our infrastructure, as well as retooling for a greener country. This investment is a long-overdue correction of our misguided national priorities. But there is another infrastructure that has been at best neglected and at worst assaulted in recent years, and that is our infrastructure of justice.

To some extent the infrastructure of justice is physical, including courthouses, prosecutors' and public defenders' offices—and prisons. We certainly have not neglected building prisons in recent years, as draconian sentencing laws have put a record number of men and many women behind bars. This has been the greatest boom-time in recorded history for the prison-industrial complex. But far more than bricks and mortar, the infrastructure of laws and policies and human capital tell the story of the health of justice in America.

Given the nature of the justice system, repairing the broken

Gara LaMarche is president of The Atlantic Philanthropies.

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infrastructure is not simply, or even primarily, a matter of federal action. What is required is an understanding of the pieces and what needs to happen at various levels, with the right leadership, to put them back together.

Let's start with influencing who sits on the federal bench. More than pushing for individual nominees, we need to change the sorry frame of the debate about judges and the roles they play in our democracy. President Obama has begun that process with the successful nomination of Sonia Sotomayor as a Supreme Court justice. Sotomayor cast her first vote on the Court in a death penalty case, supporting the claims of the defendant. By any measure, she is among the most qualified new justices of the past century. In stressing her real-world experience, the president tried to move beyond the tiresome wedge issues over which Supreme Court nominations have recently been waged. But conservative judicial activists insisted on waging old battles; in the end, only nine Republican senators voted for her confirmation.

We have lost ground steadily in debates over the Supreme Court and the role of judges generally in recent decades, because we have allowed those debates to be framed almost entirely in terms of issues like abortion and the separation of church and state. We need a Court that forcefully upholds both the separation clause and the right to abortion, of course. But we also need a Court that is, as the president has put it to the derision of the right, "empathetic" to those who have been economically marginalized in a society whose key institutions have always sided in recent years with the rich against the poor. If we can get people to care about the Supreme Court not just because it is going to stop a judge in Alabama from putting the Ten Commandments in his courtroom, not just because it is going to force the government to treat a suspected terrorist more fairly, but also because the Court has a critical role to play in supporting fairness for working people, we will have made a genuine and important change in this country's politics.

Instead of focusing fully on our vision of justice, we are still largely playing on the field defined by the opposition. In the fight over the Sotomayor nomination, we witnessed the chutzpah of racism charges against her from the likes of Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich. We have to hope that the sick tenor of the so-called great debate that the hard right, newly enamored of filibusters, tried to force upon the Senate is the last, desperate gasp of a dying order. In seeking a way forward, we have to be diligent in learning and articulating the right lessons from the past.

The right would have you believe—and unfortunately, much of the media embrace this mistaken narrative—that the low state of discourse on these issues stems from the successful campaign against the Bork nomination in 1987, which the right claims was based on invective and caricature. (Note: I traveled the country for the American Civil Liberties Union speaking against Bork in Texas, North Dakota and Idaho, so I know that the fight against him was fairly waged, not on any personal basis but on the entirely appropriate grounds of judicial philosophy.) Bork's hostility to the role of the Court in protecting the Constitution was made plain during his confirmation hearings, and on that basis the Senate rejected him. Contrary to the right's mythology, Bork's hearings marked a high point of public understanding about the courts, and they were not at all an exercise in personal destruction. Moreover, almost all of Bork's legal arguments in the twenty years since his rejection have ratified the judgment of those who opposed his appointment.

This spring, the media reported that Sotomayor's nomination had revived so-called "identity" politics. If so, that is because those who have a desperate stake in preserving the rightward trend of the courts would like you to believe that the only people in America who don't have an identity are white men. Should it be disturbing that nearly all the candidates seriously vetted by the White House were women? Not when the nation's highest court is almost as much of an all-male preserve as the Vatican, not when there is such a plethora of stunning talent among female judges, politicians, scholars and advocates.

When access to a constitutional right depends on the size of your wallet, that is a moral as well as a constitutional outrage.

Now that Sotomayor is sworn in, we need to focus on other parts of the justice infrastructure, the first of which is removing restrictions on the courts' jurisdiction. Doing that is crucial, because we are living with the consequences of a forty-year campaign—ever since the Nixon administration—to strip the federal courts of their important role in guaranteeing the protection of constitutional rights. One aspect of this campaign, which has escalated in the past ten years, has been to strip the courts of their ability to hear the claims of some of the most marginalized people in our society who face significant discrimination, from prisoners to noncitizens. So one part of a restorative agenda is to remove restrictions on federal court jurisdiction imposed by antirights forces to tip the scales away from justice. This is not the sexiest issue, any more than fixing sewers and dams is when it comes to physical infrastructure, but it is a vitally important one.

It is essential that we have a national commitment to improving the quality of legal representation for criminal defendants and those seeking a fair shake in the civil justice system. Well over forty years since the landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision, as the Constitution Project pointed out in an April report, "sometimes counsel is not provided at all, and it often is supplied in ways that make a mockery…of the Supreme Court's soaring rhetoric. Throughout the United States, indigent defense systems are struggling…. Due to funding shortfalls, excessive caseloads, and a host of other problems, many are truly failing." Moreover, the *New York Times* reported in November 2008 that public defenders' offices in at least seven states have refused to take on new cases, so overwhelming are

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their workloads [see also Eyal Press, "Keeping *Gideon*'s Promise," April 3, 2006].

For these failures, it must be bluntly stated, too many of our fellow Americans pay with their liberty. When access to a constitutional right depends on the size of your wallet, which is far too often correlated with the color of your skin, your gender or your ethnicity, that is a moral as well as a constitutional outrage. The Constitution Project report, from a bipartisan commission chaired by Walter Mondale and William Sessions, provides a blueprint for action by states and the federal government. Implementing these steps must be a central element of infrastructure repair for the justice system.

Repairing the broken infrastructure of justice also requires fixing the civil side of the system, which is in at least as bad shape as the criminal side of the system, in part because we lack a "civil *Gideon*" as a point of leverage. In an article in a recent *Harvard Law and Policy Review* based on an extensive review of the data, Kevin Clermont and Stewart Schwab wrote that the federal courts have become so consistently anti-plaintiff in employment discrimination cases that they are in danger of abandoning their role as a forum in which the powerless can seek redress from the powerful. Add to this the hobbling of federal legal services programs with restrictions on whom they can serve that mirror the jurisdictional limits on the federal courts; the virtual starvation of these programs through funding cuts [see Peter Edelman, "…And a Law for Poor People," August 3/10]; and the neutering of almost all federal administrative agencies charged with protecting rights, from the Civil Rights Commission to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. There is a huge reconstructive agenda before us.

We understand that the physical infrastructure investments we need to make as a country must not simply replicate outmoded and wasteful technologies and approaches. Similarly, we must be careful to approach the renewal of our justice infrastructure guided by new ideas. We need to pay attention to the vibrant movement, particularly at the grassroots level, to incorporate human rights standards and approaches into organizing and legal reform. We are not going back to the mid-1960s, the height of the Warren Court era, when decision after decision pushed forward the frontiers of civil rights and liberties, with judges often leading the way. Nor should we. Our rights will not be secure if we only or primarily rely on the courts. However, the new domestic human rights movement points the way to a different future. Here, too, there is a blueprint: *Human Rights at Home*, a collaborative effort of more than forty organizations moving forward through the Campaign for a New Domestic Human Rights Agenda with a multipronged education and advocacy strategy.

The Obama administration has been responsive to this movement and should step up the pace of implementing its recommendations, including a reconstituted and revitalized Interagency Working Group on Human Rights, a restructured and strengthened Civil Rights Commission with human rights added to its name and mandate, strengthened US compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and federal support for coordination of state and local efforts for human rights promotion and compliance.

There is so much more to do in revitalizing our infrastructure of justice, including immigration reform, which would help bring irregular migrants out of the shadows and into full democratic participation, and would end the bizarre form of American apartheid that denies more than 10 million workers from other countries rights in the nation that depends on their vital labor; reversal of the civil liberties abuses perpetrated in the name of national security since 2001, which have made us, in the ACLU's memorable and pithy phrase, less free and less safe; and reversal of the incarceration policies that, according to a March study by the Pew Center on the States, have put one in 100 Americans behind bars at a cost that some say has skyrocketed more than 300 percent in the past two decades.

We now have a president who has a strong sense of the big picture and a stunning ability to communicate it. Barack Obama takes his teaching role seriously and assumes the intelligence of the American people, including our ability to appreciate complexity.

We need the president and many others to knit traditional justice concerns more closely together with a broader progressive agenda. We need working families to see what they have at stake in who sits on the Supreme Court and how they rule, and we need to reject the cynical use of wedge issues once and for all. We need to connect investments in education and health and jobs to the justice system; to make clear the consequences of underinvestment in young people, particularly in communities of color; and to show that every dollar spent on prison bars is one not spent on schoolbooks. We need to connect the parts of the justice system so that the manipulation of fear that has for too long driven our criminal justice policies, and therefore our politics, and the manipulation of fear since the terrorist attacks of 2001 are understood as cut from the same cloth.

Most important, we need a long-term strategic plan for restoring the infrastructure of justice, with the necessary political will and the path to get there. President Obama must find time for this urgent task, some elements of which he has already taken on. But whether that happens depends to a great extent on those of us who support a more generous vision of justice than the cramped view peddled by the right for the past four decades.

At the center of our vision is achieving the state of justice in which race and gender and ethnicity are not the determinants of who ends up in prison or on an ICE airplane to the Mexican border, or winds up dead at the hands of an abusive husband or an out-of-control cop or soldier. We will have achieved a small but important part of that goal when the Supreme Court looks like the America of those whose rights it is the ultimate guardian. Yes, the Court should have some connection to and empathy with those who come before it challenging a powerful interest, whether it's the state or a rich corporation. ■

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Get Happy

Americans deserve a government agency charged with fostering the pursuit of happiness.

by WALTER MOSLEY

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

KAREN CALDICOTT

Americans are an unhappy, unhealthy lot. From the moment we declared our independence from the domination of British rule, we have included the people's right to pursue happiness as one of the primary privileges of our citizens and the responsibility of our government. Life and liberty are addressed to one degree or another by our executive, legislative and judicial branches, but our potential for happiness has lagged far behind.

As the quote above says (and does not say), freedom was once the province of white men; now the lack of that freedom and the subsequent loss of the potential for happiness belongs to all of us. Our happiness is kept from us by prisonlike schools and meaningless jobs, un(der)employment and untreated physical and psychological ailments, by political leaders who scare the votes out of us and corporate "persons" that buy up all the resources that have been created and defined by our labor.

Citizens are not treated like members of society but more like employees who can be cut loose for any reason large or small, whether that reason be an individual action or some greater event like the downturn of the stock market. We are lied to by our leaders and the mass media to such a great extent that it's almost impossible to lay a finger on one thing that we can say, unequivocally, is true. We wage a "war on drugs" while our psychiatrists prescribe mood-altering medicines at an alarming rate. We eat and drink and smoke too much, and sleep too little. We worry about health and taxes and the stock market until one of the three finally drags us down. We fall for all sorts of get-rich-quick schemes, from the stock market to the lottery. We practice rampant consumerism, launch perpetual wars and seek out meaningless sex.

Through these studies we create aberrant citizens who glean their empty and impossible hopes from television, the Internet and stadium sports. These issues, and others, form the seat of our discontent, a throne of nails under a crown of thorns.

Happiness is considered by most to be a subset of wealth, which is not necessarily true. But even if it was true, most Americans are not wealthy, and most of those who are will lose that wealth before they die. Besides, money cannot buy happiness. It can buy bigger TVs and comelier sex partners; it can pay for liposuction and enough fossil fuel to speed away from smog-filled urban sprawls. Money can influence court verdicts, but it cannot buy justice. And without the bedrock of justice, how can any American citizen be truly happy?

Happiness is a state of mind cultivated under a sophisticated understanding of a rapidly changing world. In times gone by the world didn't change so fast. As recently as the early twentieth century it would take a generation or more for knowledge to double; now the sum total of our knowledge doubles each year, perhaps even less than that. As technology and technique change, so does our world and our reactions to it. The Internet, gene-splicing, transportation, overpopulation and other vast areas of ever-growing knowledge and experience force significant changes in our lifestyles every few years.

The pursuit of happiness implies room to move, but the definition of that space has changed—from open fields to Internet providers, from talk with a friend or religious leader to psychotherapy and antidepression drugs.

If you are reading this essay and believe that you and the majority of your fellows are happy, content, satisfied and generally pleased with the potentials presented to you and others, then you don't have to continue reading. I certainly do not wish to bring unhappiness to anyone who feels they fit into this world like a pampered foot into a sheepskin slipper.

Some of us are naturally happy; others have had the good fortune to be born at the right moment, in the right place. But many of us suffer under a corporatized bureaucracy where homelessness, illiteracy, poverty, malnourishment (both physical and spiritual) and an unrelenting malaise are not only possible but likely.

One cure—for those who feel that their pursuit of happiness has been sent on a long detour through the labor camps of American and international capitalism—is the institution of a government department that has as its only priority the happiness of all Americans.

At first blush this might seem like a frivolous suggestion. Each and every American is responsible for her or his own happiness, whatever that is, you might say. Furthermore, even if a government department was designed to monitor, propagate and ensure the happiness of our citizens, that department should not have the power or even the desire to

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Walter Mosley, a member of The Nation*'s editorial board, is the author of the bestselling Easy Rawlins series of mysteries. His latest book is* The Long Fall, *a brand-new mystery series introducing Leonid McGill, a New York City private detective.*

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enforce its conclusions on anyone.

But the suggestion here is to expand the possibilities for happiness, not to codify or impose these possibilities. Our Declaration of Independence says that the pursuit of happiness is an "unalienable right." This language seems to make the claim that it is a government responsibility to ensure that all Americans, or as many as possible, are given a clear path toward that pursuit.

This is not and cannot be some rocky roadway through a barren landscape. Our world is more like the tropics, crowded by a lush forest of fast-growing knowledge. The path must be cleared every day. How can a normal person be happy with herself in this world, when the definition of the world is changing almost hourly?

What we need is a durable and yet flexible definition (created by study and consensus) that will impact the other branches of government. If we can, through a central agency, begin to come to a general awareness of what we need to clear the path to the pursuit of happiness, I believe that the lives we are living stand a chance of being more satisfying. If we can have a dialogue based on our forefathers' declaration, I believe that we can tame the shadowy government and corporate incursions into our lives.

What do we need to be assured of our own path to a contented existence? Enough food to eat? Health? Help with childcare? A decent, fulfilling education? Should we feel that the land we stand on is ours? Or that our welfare is the most important job of a government that is made up by our shared citizenship?

These simple interrogations are complex in their nature. All paths are not the same; many conflict. But we need a government that assures us the promise of the Declaration of Independence. We need to realize that the ever more convoluted world of knowledge can flummox even the greatest minds. We need to concentrate on our own happiness if we expect to make a difference in the careening technological and slovenly evolving social world of the twenty-first century. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

Kaufman Replies

New York City

The article Harvey Klehr refers to, "The Myth of 'Premature Antifascism,'" which he wrote with John Earl Haynes and published in *The New Criterion* in 2002, contains significant omissions and a puzzling disregard for testimony not to the authors' liking. In it, they describe their exhaustive search for documentation that a US government agency employed the term "premature antifascist" toward the Lincoln Brigade veterans. They fail to mention a speech Congressman John Coffee of Washington gave January 2, 1945, in Madison Square Garden, which was entered into the *Congressional Record*. "There is, of course, no honor high enough for those few thousand gallant American men and boys," Coffee said about the Lincoln veterans. "They call them premature antifascists in some nasty Washington circles today." Furthermore, Klehr and Haynes's search took place in the 1990s, yet nowhere do they mention the salient fact that a fire at the National Personnel Records Center outside St. Louis in 1973 destroyed some 16 million to 18 million military personnel records, among them an estimated 80 percent of the files of World War II Army veterans. More troubling, Klehr and Haynes dismiss as irrelevant the testimony of Lincoln veterans like Leslie Kish, who detailed the following in John Gerassi's marvelous oral history, *The Premature Antifascists*: "I was in Washington when the Second World War started and in July of 1942 went into the army. But then the harassment did start.... I was grilled and grilled. Boy was I grilled! I remember in my first session there were two guys in civilian clothes and two military guys who started asking me all sorts of incredible questions. This was the first time I heard the expression 'premature antifascists.' That's what they called me."

In his letter, Klehr writes that the vets "sardonically appropriated" the term, a point no one disputes. (Gerassi, whose father was a Republican general, makes that clear with his title.) Klehr doesn't mention here, however, the claim he and Haynes made in *The New Criterion* that "there are indications that it was Communists and the veterans themselves who first employed the term." What are the "indications" for their claim? One is, apparently, an anonymous response to a query for documents the two posted on a history discussion listserv. "You will *never* [their italics] find the term in official records," the unidentified responder stated, "because it was used by people who opposed Hitler 'too early' as in the Spanish Civil War as a self-deprecating term for their own ability to see ahead and the U.S. Govt's inability to see what Hitler was planning." Case closed.

What's obscured by Klehr's narrow focus on an epithet's provenance is the discrimination and harassment perpetrated by the military and the FBI against the vets after they came back from Spain. John Hovan, a gentle 93-year-old truck driver with the Lincoln Brigade whose house was firebombed and painted with swastikas after he pleaded the Fifth before the House Un-American Activities Committee, told me recently what happened while he was working as a shoe repairman at the Quonset Point Naval Air Station in Rhode Island, in 1946. "I worked there as a civilian, and one day this ship's service officer came to me and said he had to tell me something," Hovan, who received an honorable discharge from the Navy after three and a half years of wartime service, recalled. "He hemmed and hawed and then said, 'Well, I'm mixed up, but I'll see you tomorrow.' So the next day he finally said, 'Look, I've gotten orders to fire you, to let you go, and I can't get any answers why.'"

After his firing, Hovan found work in a textile mill and then a chemical plant. But for years he and his wife were harassed by the FBI. "They came to the house all the time," he told me. "I remember they came, too, when I was working at the textile mill. They were waiting for me out at the parking lot, trying to get me to talk."

Dan Kaufman

Food for Thought

No sooner had our special issue "Food for All" [Sept. 21] gone to press than we heard from Food for All, a foundation whose program is run in more than 6,000 grocery stores. Millions of Americans support Food for All with contributions at the checkout counter of their supermarket.

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Books & the Arts.

A Domestic Existentialist

by NATASHA WIMMER

I can't remember the first time I read Mercè Rodoreda's *The Time of the Doves*. It might have been when I was 13, living with my family in the high-rise suburbs of Madrid. It might have been when I was 17, back in Madrid with my mother for a few weeks in a sweltering rented room. Or it might have been when I was 19, on my own in the city, sharing an apartment near the train station with four South American girls. In any case, I read it in Spanish, under the title *La plaza del diamante* (the original Catalan title is *La plaça del diamant*). And I read it at about the same time as I read *Nada*, by Carmen Laforet. These were the first serious books I read in Spanish, and I've never forgotten them.

Certainly, few books have been as gorgeously sad. On a personal list of misery-inducing favorites including Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*, *The Time of the Doves* ranks near the top. Set in Barcelona around the time of the Spanish Civil War, it's tragic simply as a function of its setting, but Rodoreda plumbs a sadness that reaches beyond historic circumstances, a sadness born of helplessness, an almost voluptuous vulnerability. This condition will be familiar to readers of Rhys's novels, to which Rodoreda's novels bear a certain resemblance. Rodoreda's women are notable for their almost pathological lack of volition, but also for their acute sensitivity, a nearly painful awareness of beauty.

This, of course, is what made them so appealing to my moody adolescent self. In the midst of great upheaval, Rodoreda's characters—and Laforet's—lead cloistered, almost solipsistic lives, oblivious of politics and warmaking. Natalia, of *The Time of the Doves*, is an unworldly girl swept off her feet by Quimet, a charmer with a cruel streak who joins the Republican army and leaves her with two small children and a roof full of doves. Andrea, of *Nada*, comes to Barcelona just after the war to study at the university and moves into a crumbling Gothic apartment that houses three generations of her troubled family. Both women are immersed in the squalid details of domestic life, as famished for a glimpse of beauty as they are for a decent meal. With their senses sharpened by hunger, they're almost overwhelmed by the intensity of daily existence.

Though I didn't realize it back then, *The Time of the Doves* and *Nada* are part of a small canon of coming-of-age novels by Catalan women published in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. This was a remarkable flowering of talent and a bounty yet to be fully appreciated by English-language readers. If anyone has

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Mercè Rodoreda

Death in Spring
By Mercè Rodoreda.
Translated by Martha Tennent.
Open Letter. 150 pp. $14.95.

Natasha Wimmer is the translator of Roberto Bolaño's The Savage Detectives *and* 2666.

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heard of Rodoreda, it's probably because of the award-winning 1982 film adaptation of *The Time of the Doves*, by the Catalan director Francesc Betriu, though even that has mostly faded from memory by now. *The Time of the Doves* and a collection, *My Christina and Other Stories*, are still in print, both in translations by David Rosenthal published by Graywolf Press in the 1980s, but Rosenthal's translation of Rodoreda's novel *Camellia Street* is out of print. Laforet has fared better, with an excellent new translation of *Nada* by Edith Grossman, recently issued by the Modern Library. This brought Laforet some well-deserved attention, but the sense persists that she is part of a generation lost to American readers.

Rodoreda's range of expression runs from banal realism to exquisite impressionism.

It was a generation lost to itself, too. When the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, many of Spain's writers (and publishers and critics) fled into exile or were intimidated into silence. Most had supported the short-lived Republic, and their prospects were dismal under the new fascist regime. Literary organizations were shut down or co-opted, fiction was expected to cleave to the fascist cause and even the greats of Spanish literature were tossed on the trash heap of history. In 1942 one young journalist wrote that Spaniards should no longer look to Don Quixote as a model, because he represented decadence and defeat; better to look to Hernán Cortés, conquistador and man of action.

Barcelona, of course, was the capital of Republican Spain, and the situation of Catalan writers was particularly bleak. Catalan language and culture had been undergoing a revival since the nineteenth century, but when Franco came to power, regional languages were banned. A generation of children grew up in schools where Castilian was the only language taught, and writers who wrote in Catalan (a language most closely related to the French dialect of Provençal) were marooned in the past, their future uncertain.

Mercè Rodoreda, born in 1908, never considered writing in any language but Catalan. Her grandfather was a writer for *La Renaixença*, the journal of the Catalanist movement, and her father loved to read aloud from the works of the Catalan poets, especially Jacint Verdaguer. Despite the family's literary inclinations, Rodoreda was sent to school for only three years, until she was 10, because it was assumed that she would marry. Her mother's brother, a successful businessman recently returned from Argentina, was a suitor close at hand, and when she was 20 they were wed. They had a son, but Rodoreda, eager for independence, began to write and sought entry into literary circles.

After self-publishing a novel and writing short stories for various newspapers, Rodoreda managed to establish herself as a regular contributor of political articles to the Catalanist journal *Clarisme*. A few more novels were published (which she would later repudiate), and she began to get to know other writers and journalists, notably Andreu Nin, a translator of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, who would become her lover. Then came the war, in 1936. Rodoreda never said much about her life in Barcelona during the war years, but *The Time of the Doves* stands as testament to the hardships endured by those living in the city in the late '30s. Nin was killed in 1937, and Rodoreda separated from her husband. In 1938, remarkably, she had her first real literary success, with the autobiographical novel *Aloma*.

When Barcelona fell in early 1939, Rodoreda went into exile, but she expected to return soon. She and a group of fellow writers left the city in a bus belonging to the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, as if on some grim field trip. They took up residence in a castle designated for refugees in the town of Roissy, near Paris. There, Rodoreda began an affair with the married writer Joan Prat, who went by the pseudonym Armand Obiols. Their romance caused the group of writers to break up, and when war came to France, Rodoreda and Obiols fled to Limoges and later Bordeaux, where Rodoreda supported herself by sewing. After the war, they moved to Paris, and in 1954 they settled in Geneva, where Obiols worked as a translator for UNESCO.

The fate of refugees from Franco's Spain was cruel. War followed upon war with just a few months of respite, and those who had barely survived the destruction of their country were ill equipped to piece together an existence in war-torn France. During World War II, as during the civil war, Rodoreda often went hungry. Few writers have written as starkly and convincingly about hunger as she does in *The Time of the Doves*. One night, lying in bed with her two starving children, Natalia decides to kill them rather than watch them slowly die. Not only is there no food, but she's lost the strength to go looking for it. "What's a crust of bread when you're starving?" she asks. "Even to eat grass you've got to have the strength to go out searching for it."

In the early 1950s, at perhaps the low point of her career, Rodoreda mysteriously lost the use of her right arm and was unable to write much but poetry. She took up painting instead, until a collection of her stories won a prize and she was encouraged enough to write what would be her masterpiece, *The Time of the Doves*. It was published in Catalan in 1962 and translated into Spanish in 1965. Like *Nada* (published in 1942), it was a popular and critical success. Around the same time, she wrote *La mort i la primavera*, a very different book, which didn't find a publisher until 1986 and has only just now been translated into English, as *Death in Spring*, by Martha Tennent.

For those who've only read *The Time of the Doves*, *Death in Spring* will come as a surprise. In it, Rodoreda works in an entirely different register, heavily symbolic and fable-like. Signs of this tendency are visible in a number of her short stories, some of which are collected in *My Christina and Other Stories*. In this collection, Rodoreda's full range of expression is on display, from the almost banal realism of a later novel, *A Broken Mirror*, through the exquisite impressionism of *The Time of the Doves* and *Camellia Street*, to the garish symbolism of *Death in Spring*. In Rodoreda's more symbolic fictions, nature comes to the fore and humans mimic animals or morph into them, as in the short story "The Salamander," in which a woman who sleeps with a married man is burned to death and turns into a salamander, returning to live under her lover's bed.

The use of symbolism is a form of sublimation, in the same way that the ruthless elision and economy of Rodoreda's writing in *The Time of the Doves* is a form of sublimation. In both cases, Rodoreda heightens and transforms the brutal reality of existence in a world of endless war. The artfulness of the latter method, however, stands in contrast to the often garbled mythmaking of some of the short stories and *Death in Spring*. Like "The Salamander," *Death in Spring* is set in a village that's part medieval, part contemporary and part infernal. A river runs be-

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neath it, through a rocky passage, and every year one man must swim it to make sure the village isn't about to be washed away. Most emerge near death, their faces torn by the rocks, but even this is benign compared with the village's rituals of death, in which living villagers are stuffed full of pink cement and entombed upright in trees.

These savage customs are related by a young man who watches his father try in vain to escape the death ritual, and then marries his 16-year-old stepmother, a dwarf-like girl who gnaws on balls of horse fat. They have a daughter, who's born deformed and who transfers her affections from her father to the nihilistic son of the village blacksmith. From this point on, the protagonist's fortunes (such as they are) decline, and he loses everything he loves before finding himself chosen to swim under the village. In outline (and in full), this reads like a nightmare, but it lacks the inexorable logic of dreams. Without this logic, the novel disintegrates into disjointed scenes, sometimes terrifying and sometimes simply risible.

Love, often withheld from human beings, is lavished on places and things.

The Time of the Doves is to *Death in Spring* what a Vermeer is to a clumsy expressionist painting. Natalia's voice is a creation of genius: naïve, stubborn, unself-consciously lyrical. Upon her first appearance, she says: "I was dressed all in white, my dress and petticoats starched, my shoes like two drops of milk, my earrings white enamel, three hoop bracelets that matched the earrings, and a white purse Julieta said was made of vinyl with a snap shaped like a gold shellfish." Unlike Rodoreda, she is unsophisticated, a clerk in a pastry shop until she marries a man named Quimet. Her world is her apartment, her block, the nearby plazas, the little stand where her friend Senyora Enriqueta sells chestnuts and peanuts. When the war comes, she refers to it only obliquely. Quimet is involved in mysterious activities, and there's no more cooking gas. All the passion that might have been roused by the war is expressed in her battle with the milling pigeons that Quimet raises on the roof.

Rodoreda's novel is distinctly and defiantly antiheroic. There's nothing gallant or stirring about the war as she sees it. In fact, the war is barely visible except in its effect on those behind the lines. When Quimet is killed and Natalia is left alone with her starving children, she struggles for a long time ("that night for supper the three of us shared a sardine and a rotten tomato") but finally creeps to the grocer's to beg for hydrochloric acid, which she plans to funnel into her children's mouths while they're asleep. Even her rescue at the last minute is by a markedly unheroic character, the grocer who spots the desperation in her eyes and offers her a job—and, ultimately, marriage.

If there's heroism in the novel, it's all Rodoreda's. This was a heroic novel to write at a time when Spain clamored for a Cortés, not a Don Quixote. It was a heroic novel to write in Catalan, when it was unclear whether the language would survive the next few decades. It was a heroic novel—a feat of the imagination—to write from the antiseptic safe haven of Geneva. Rodoreda seems to have indulged fatalism in her fiction in a way that she wouldn't allow herself in life, most notably in the bleak novel *Camellia Street*, about an orphan, Cecília, who becomes a prostitute and then a kept woman, the willing agent of her own degradation. The novel bears a striking resemblance to Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, with its furnished rooms, miscarriages and abortions. A long sequence in which Cecília is virtually kept prisoner, drugged and spied upon by a couple of ostensible protectors, is one of the most perfectly pitched and devastating descriptions of victimhood ever written.

It's curious that Rodoreda is so esteemed by feminists (she's the frequent subject of academic papers), when her novels revolve around the abdication of control by women and their subsequent humiliation. And yet there's something steely and thoroughly modern about the way Rodoreda acknowledges the unsentimental deal-making that masquerades as love. In the novel *Aloma*, Aloma's brother explains his marriage to his sister: "Let's not fool ourselves: I was never in love with Anna. She was just the kind of woman I could bring home." When Natalia marries the grocer, who is unfailingly kind but nothing like Quimet, she falls into a black mood. "Nothing pleased me: not the shop, or the hallway like a dark intestine." She did love Quimet, but she was afraid of him, too, and though she knows he's dead, the fear that he'll come back and catch her with the grocer haunts her for years.

Love, often withheld from human beings, is lavished on places and things, on flowers and shades of light and coffee pots. Rodoreda has a particular fondness for household objects, much-handled and familiar: the grocer's bedspread is "all crocheted with roses on top and a fringe of crocheted curls you could wash and iron and either they wouldn't come uncurled at all or they'd immediately curl up again like they had a mind of their own." On the grocer's bureau, between two bell jars full of flowers, there's a seashell. "That shell with all the sea's moaning inside it was more to me than a person. No person could live with all those waves coming and going inside them. And whenever I dusted it I'd always pick it up and listen to it for a minute." Rodoreda is a domestic existentialist, a brilliant composer of interiors, both physical and mental. Only *The Time of the Doves* and, to a lesser degree, *Camellia Street* are fully realized expressions of her skill, but those two books—like Natalia's children, as she realizes at a moment when she is suddenly able to see them objectively—are two flowers.

When a book in translation doesn't catch on the first time around, it seldom gets a second reading. And yet at a cultural moment when the recycling of past greats has become commonplace (John Travolta, say, or the rescued classics issued by New York Review Books), the smaller masterpieces of the past are more accessible. Recognition fifty years late is different from recognition in the historic moment. The names Rodoreda and Laforet may never occupy a place in the American consciousness like that of García Márquez or even Vargas Llosa (all four authors were first published in the United States at more or less the same time, in the mid-1960s to early '70s; incidentally, García Márquez was one of Rodoreda's early champions, and Vargas Llosa wrote the introduction to the Modern Library edition of *Nada*).

But there is room for a resurgence, even a resurrection. Rodoreda lived until 1983, beloved by readers around the world and a role model for writers in Spain and Catalonia, where she finally returned. Since *The Time of the Doves*, many thousands of books have been written about the experience of the Spanish Civil War, but none has equaled it. Rodoreda's novel deserves a place in literature as the homefront equivalent of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and perhaps someday it will be granted it. ■

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Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (I)

Would it bring peace to the tortured Middle East?

In a complete turnabout from previous positions, but probably also yielding to enormous pressure by President Obama, Israel's Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu has declared his willingness to accept a Palestinian state.

What are the facts?

A generous offer. Since the "two-state solution" has long been declared to be the Holy Grail of the Palestinians, one would have expected that Mr. Netanyahu's announcement be greeted with cheers and hosannas. That, however, not surprisingly perhaps, was not the case. In fact, the Palestinians and all others involved declared it to be an insult and a "non-starter." The principal objections were that Mr. Netanyahu insisted that the newly created Palestinian state would have to be totally demilitarized, and that its air space would be available to the IAF (Israeli Air Force); that Jerusalem would remain undivided as the capital of the Jewish state; that the "Palestinian refugees" would, if they so desired, be returned to the newly formed state and not to Israel; that the Palestinians acknowledge Israel as the state of the Jews; and, finally, that he did not commit for the "settlements" to be dismantled. We shall address some of these objections in this message, the rest in a future message.

> "As Abba Eban, Israel's former Foreign Secretary put it: 'The Arabs will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.'"

The "Settlements." Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") is the ancient Biblical homeland of the Jewish people. This area is part of the Palestinian Mandate, which was declared by the Balfour Declaration and by the mandate of the League of Nations, to be the homeland of the Jewish people. After the 1948 War of Israel's Liberation this area remained in possession of the Kingdom of Jordan, which declared sovereignty over the area. The only possible rationale for the conclusion that this area is Palestinian land is that it is encompassed by the 1949 armistice line. There is absolutely no other reason. This area has never been Palestinian land. In fact, never before the creation of the State of Israel has there ever been a Palestinian people or a Palestinian country anywhere in the long course of human history. The Palestinians were never until recent times in any control over the area. At the very most, the area could be described as "disputed." In fact, a very good case could be made that Jews have a better right than the Arabs to live there. What a shame that even the leaders of our country cannot see this fundamental truth. And don't let's forget that over one million Arabs live in Israel unmolested and nobody gets exercised about that.

Demilitarization. Not so long ago, Israel unilaterally evacuated every last Jewish family from Gaza. One would have hoped that the Palestinians, grateful for being rid of the hated Jews and no longer having to suffer their presence, would have shown their gratitude for that "liberation." Instead, almost from the very first day, they bombarded Israeli cities with thousands of rockets. Eventually, the patience of Israel snapped and it invaded Gaza to put a stop to this outrage. It has to be clear to all that having had such bad experience with Gaza, Israel is fully justified to expect that if statehood were ultimately granted to the Palestinians, and if demilitarization were not imposed and strictly supervised, the Palestinians of the "West Bank" would be equally inclined to attack Israel on a daily basis. Instead of being confronted by the insular Gaza, Israel would be surrounded totally by those who are sworn to destroy it. Full demilitarization would have to be a key requirement of any Palestinian statehood. Without it, virtually all of Israel – its population centers, its industries, its military installations and its international airport – would be under the gun. Life in Israel would be virtually impossible. How could anybody possibly think otherwise?

Return of the "Refugees." During the 1948 War of Liberation, about 650,000 Arabs, goaded by their leaders, fled the nascent state of Israel. They and their descendants wish to "return" to Israel. That is a bizarre request. The principal purpose of a Palestinian state would obviously have to be the ingathering and settling of the "Palestinian refugees" and not to foist them onto Israel. Injecting them into Israel would undermine the Jewish state and smooth the path to its destruction. And that is, indeed, the rub. The principal intent of the Arabs is not the creation of a state, but, as they repeat over and over, the destruction of Israel, which they call the "cancer on the Arab body." And don't let's forget that about 800,000 Jews, who escaped barely with their lives from Arab countries during the War of Liberation in 1948 and during the Six-Day War in 1967, were quickly absorbed into the state of Israel and are now at least one-half of the total population. The Arabs, in contrast, have kept their "refugees" in miserable refugee camps for the last 60+ years, on the dole of the world – mostly that of the United States.

There is little likelihood that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer, however it might ultimately be modified, will be accepted by the Arabs. Because, if that were the objective, they could have had their own state for over seventy years. But whatever was offered was never sufficient. As Abba Eban, Israel's former Foreign Secretary, so well put it: "The Arabs will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Sadly, therefore, there is little question that Mr. Netanyahu's generous offer of a separate state for the Palestinians will again be rejected – most likely even being followed by another "intifada."

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JAE C. HONG/AP

Price signs at a Las Vegas Wal-Mart, May 16, 2006

Operation Rollback

by JEFFERSON DECKER

In October 2003 employees at more than 800 chain supermarkets in California walked out of their jobs after management demanded pay cuts and a reduction in health insurance benefits. The ensuing strike and lockout were notable for the number of workers involved (59,000), the duration of the conflict (more than four months) and the defeat eventually suffered by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which represented the workers. Just as notable was what had ostensibly provoked the showdown. In 2002, the discount chain Wal-Mart announced that it would place at least forty new Supercenters, the largest of its big-box stores, in California. A nonunion company famous for expanding its market share by undercutting its competitors' prices, Wal-Mart had proven hard to beat in the past. And in addition to offering a massive selection of housewares, toys and clothes, its Supercenters were outfitted with a full-service grocery. The mere prospect of losing customers to these new stores convinced Safeway, Albertsons and other large grocery chains that they could seek concessions from their workers on the pretext that wage cuts were a necessary measure for remaining competitive. Wal-Mart, it appeared, had changed the way the grocery business operated in California before it even entered the market.

The Retail Revolution
How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business.
By Nelson Lichtenstein.
Metropolitan. 311 pp. $25.

In *The Retail Revolution*, Nelson Lichtenstein explains how Wal-Mart could shape, if not dictate, the agendas of so many third parties. And he suggests that the California grocery strike was just one particularly visible example of the profound impact of the Bentonville, Arkansas, chain on the broader economy. A labor historian best known for his biography of autoworkers leader Walter Reuther, Lichtenstein has become something of an authority on the discount Goliath. In 2006 he edited a collection of essays, published by the New Press, on the economics and historical circumstances of the Wal-Mart phenomenon. With *The Retail Revolution*, he provides a comprehensive story of the corporation's awesome growth and expansion. Drawing on sociological scholarship and reporting about the experiences of Wal-Mart workers in the United States and around the world, as well as information made public by lawsuits involving the company, Lichtenstein describes Wal-Mart's origins, expansion and current business practices, from its relationship with subcontracting manufacturers to its protocol for scheduling night shifts. He respects the company's argument for its own social utility—that it brings an abundance of goods to consumers at the lowest possible price—and admires its ability to solve complex logistical problems that have long bedeviled discount retailers. But he is horrified by the dispiriting low-wage, part-time economy that Wal-Mart has helped create.

Forty years ago Wal-Mart was a small chain of stores concentrated in a sparsely populated patch of the American South. Today it employs 2.1 million people, more than twenty times as many as ExxonMobil, the largest oil company in the United States. Its total revenue exceeds that of Target, Home Depot, Sears, Safeway and Kroger combined. It has prospered, Lichtenstein argues, by mastering the art of moving household products from manufacturer to consumer in the most efficient way possible, and by using economies of scale and low labor costs to undersell other stores. Its size and its just-in-time business model are now imitated by numerous companies looking to hold down costs while manufacturing and selling consumer goods in a global economy. And its success has put immense economic pressure on its competition, not to mention labor unions, governments and many of its own suppliers. Indeed, Lichtenstein argues that by squeezing the resources of the small-town, lower-middle-class Americans who flock to its stores, Wal-Mart's economic model also threatens its own bottom line. Global commerce in the twenty-first century is an uncertain, hyper-competitive affair—even for those companies that grow wealthy from perfecting it.

Jefferson Decker is a lecturer in American history at Columbia University.

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Wal-Mart was the brainchild of Sam Walton, the chain's co-founder and co-namesake. Born in 1918, Walton grew up in Missouri, where his father, a former cotton farmer from Oklahoma, worked during the Depression as a debt collector for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York. After graduating from the University of Missouri, Walton moved to Oklahoma, where he was employed in a defense plant and married the daughter of a prominent rancher and politician. After serving in the military, Walton spent five years managing a Ben Franklin chain store in Newport, Arkansas, a cotton-processing town eighty miles from Memphis. After turning around the struggling franchise, he was pushed out of the job by his landlord, who wanted to give the flourishing business to his son. Walton started over in the northwestern part of the state, in a town called Bentonville, population 2,964. He was running several Ben Franklin franchises in the Arkansas countryside and was expanding into other states when he opened his first Wal-Mart, in nearby Rogers, in 1962.

Walton's exile to the Ozarks, Lichtenstein argues, was a great stroke of luck. Walton arrived there with a basic business model—keep prices low by ordering in bulk and minimizing his markup; count on rapid turnover of goods to make a profit—and northern Arkansas proved to be a perfect location to try it out. As late as the 1960s, the region's predominantly rural economy was still undergoing modernization, and the small farmers who lived there appreciated the low prices offered by Walton. At the same time, car ownership and paved roads allowed a rural clientele to travel much farther than they had previously been willing to venture in order to shop. Walton located his stores in the mill towns and county seats of Arkansas, southern Missouri and Oklahoma—rarely choosing a community with a population of more than 10,000. But he made sure to build each store near an interstate so folks could drive to it from a nearby town or county. Other national chains, worried that rural America was not dense enough to support big stores, stayed away. (Kmart rarely built a store in a city with fewer than 50,000 residents.) Walton's only competition came from the small, dusty mom-and-pop stores that dotted the old country roads but were unable to match Wal-Mart's prices or selection.

Walton's move to northern Arkansas was fortunate for several other reasons, Lichtenstein argues. Because of agricultural modernization, there were numerous farmers' daughters and seasonal agricultural workers happy to earn a regular paycheck by working in retail. Organized labor had been notably unsuccessful in organizing the South, so Walton did not have to worry about unions. And both his workforce and clientele came from the same relatively homogeneous population. Most of the local black population had fled after a wave of brutal race riots in the 1910s and '20s, so the Southern Plains were almost exclusively white when Walton began his business. Ironically, this troubled past meant that Wal-Mart was the rare major chain store to survive the 1960s without having been embroiled in protests over integration. The region was also overwhelmingly Protestant, and the store came to reflect the socially conservative, Christian culture of its home base. To this day, the company still recruits future executives from a network of small evangelical colleges in the South and nurtures them through the company hierarchy. It has banned from its magazine racks not only *Playboy* but also *Rolling Stone* because it was deemed inappropriate for children. And the store's prominent displays were credited by the publishers of *Left Behind*, a series of apocalyptic Christian thrillers set in the immediate aftermath of the Rapture, with making the books bestsellers.

These accidents of geography would have made little difference had Walton not been able to tame the logistical jungle of general retailing and pass along some of the savings to the consumer. Walton faced the same problem as any other storekeeper. He needed to buy merchandise in a quantity large enough to be able to negotiate a discount from the manufacturer. But he also needed to minimize the costs of warehousing merchandise or stocking items that never sell. His solution was simple: minimize the opportunity for merchandise to sit around by eliminating warehouse space. He did not build "warehouses" but regional "distribution centers" with very little capacity to hold products over long periods of time. His employees have no choice but to unload a shipment from a wholesaler and immediately reload it for shipment to individual stores. Nor did he provide those stores with much room to hold products out of sight. Employees would have to unpack boxes and find room for the merchandise on the shelves as soon as possible.

To keep his stores supplied, Walton made early and extensive use of a now ubiquitous

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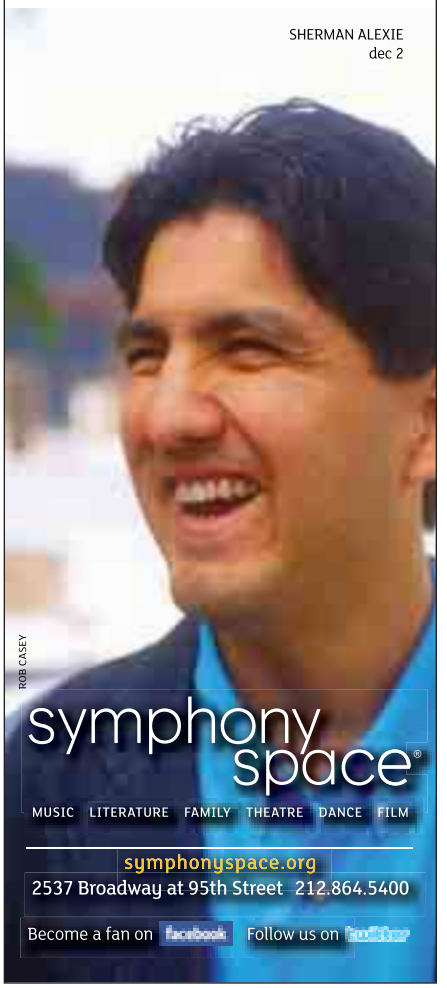

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piece of technology: the Universal Product Code (UPC), the bar code that automatically identifies a product and, when scanned by a laser, allows a computer to look up its price. Originally designed for supermarket checkout counters, the UPC took a long time to migrate to the rest of the retail world. Walton, Lichtenstein explains, was an early adopter who "demanded that all Wal-Mart vendors slap a bar code on every product they shipped to his stores." Then he invested in a satellite network that fed the computerized sales information of individual stores to a "digital warehouse" in Bentonville. This continuous stream of data allowed the company to track purchases in real time and largely automate the stocking and restocking process—an essential element of the company's just-in-time approach to reordering. The satellite hookup also allowed Walton to broadcast live televised pep talks to the sales teams in his stores until his death in 1992.

Walton and his successors also managed to save money by eschewing high fashion, special sales and creative marketing. From the beginning, the store has focused on offering consumers an "Every Day Low Price," as the strategy was termed, on brand names and off-brand merchandise. This approach was made possible by the company's effective logistics operation: with its inventory managed by computer, it was less likely to overbuy merchandise that it would later have to dump at clearance prices. The "Every Day Low Price" strategy also meant that Wal-Mart did not need to develop exclusive, "must-buy" items or lines of clothing in order to attract customers. Wal-Mart missed out on the home runs that rival Kmart has periodically hit, such as its line of signature houseware endorsed by lifestyle guru Martha Stewart. But unlike his rivals, Walton rarely bet significant company resources on a product with the potential to flop.

Finally, Walton succeeded at cutting out the middleman at every possible transaction. He had little patience for the wholesalers who traditionally stood between manufacturers and his distribution centers, and he bought straight from the source whenever possible. (Walton had even less use for salesmen, and he took their pervasiveness to be a sign of rampant poor management.) But by making the middleman redundant, Lichtenstein argues, Walton helped to change the power relationships between retail stores and manufacturers. As Wal-Mart computerized sales information and automated restocking, it obtained much more extensive knowledge about certain products than the companies that made them. As a result, manufacturers lost control of their product. Wal-Mart still sends buyers around the world to prospect for merchandise it might want to sell, but major consumer brands also have offices in Bentonville, where they meet with Wal-Mart executives, learn what the store wants to sell and try to produce it. Increasingly, the store stocks its aisles with off-brand merchandise manufactured especially for the chain.

The other component of the drive for low prices has been reducing labor costs. Though Walton originally conceived of Wal-Mart as a place where consumers could buy brand-name products at below-average prices, expansion and competition pushed the company to search for more and cheaper alternatives—a quest that took it to Central America and East Asia. The company does not own any factories abroad, but it contracts with numerous suppliers and foreign middlemen in order to obtain a continuous supply of inexpensive wares. Originally, this meant asking a contractor in Taipei or Hong Kong to produce knockoffs of popular items. "We would just take our best-selling U.S.-made items, send them to the Orient, and say, 'See if you can make something like this,'" Sam Walton explained in his autobiography. "We could use 100,000 units of this, or more, if the quality holds up." Today, Wal-Mart's world buying headquarters is in Shenzhen, a bustling industrial city along the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province. In 1979 the Chinese government designated Shenzhen a "special economic zone" with low corporate taxes and few environmental regulations. Guangdong now produces a third of China's exports, 10 percent of which end up on a Wal-Mart shelf somewhere in the United States.

According to Lichtenstein, labor costs get reduced further by Wal-Mart's economies of scale. Because Wal-Mart orders are so large, he writes, "the company can demand a lower overall cost per unit than any of its competitors. This generates an excruciating squeeze on all of its suppliers, resulting in a cascade of social pathologies which corrupt and distort every supply chain relationship." The pressure to meet the company's deadline in a hyper-competitive, largely unregulated low-wage environment has led suppliers to cheat their workers and subject them to unsafe factory conditions. Some factories have instituted elaborate fines for absence or spoilage of raw materials; others make young women work eighteen-

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hour days, or house their workforce in makeshift dormitories above a humming factory. Such arrangements can prove deadly: in at least a half-dozen reported cases, a fire that started on the shop floor killed scores of young women who were sleeping above. Wal-Mart has rarely been singed by these practices. It neither owns nor operates Chinese factories and, for a combination of logistical and public relations purposes, is a step or two removed from the sausage-making process. (It even finds that the wholesalers it tried to cut out of its dealings with US corporations are quite useful in overseas markets.) Because Wal-Mart's goods are largely "interchangeable" off-brand items, the store does not have the same investment in its brand image that has forced Nike, for example, to police its subcontractors better.

Wal-Mart also works hard to squeeze labor costs on the retail end. In its US stores, Wal-Mart "associates," as the company calls its lowest rung of employees, are hired at around the minimum wage and receive health insurance only if they buy into a plan laden with co-payments and deductibles. The company uses automated scheduling software to ensure that nobody is recorded as working more than forty hours per week, and nobody is given overtime. The company has long promoted a paternalistic approach to labor relations. Before his death, low-level employees were expected to call Walton "Mr. Sam," and the home office allowed individual store employees to go over the head of their manager or regional director and petition Bentonville about an issue at their store. Wal-Mart is unrelentingly hostile to labor unions. The company spends significant money on campaigns to discourage unionization; among other things, it suggests that organized labor would undermine the "open door" to headquarters by forcing every complaint through a shop steward. And it has been willing to play hardball—eliminating positions, closing distribution centers—when unions have appeared poised to gain a foothold in its North American operations. Its paternalistic labor policy is a selling point for some customers. "It doesn't matter about the convenience," a born-again Christian from Massachusetts told *Discount Store News*. "I like Wal-Mart because it's friendly…. They are a different type of people."

Wal-Mart associates suffer not only from low pay but also irregular work hours. The company frequently readjusts shifts, sometimes on a weekly basis, to accommodate store needs and employee availability. This tends to favor those employees who have the fewest demands on their time, while making it extremely difficult for anyone with children or other dependents to accumulate enough hours to earn a decent living. Staff turnover is frequent, reaching a rate of 70 percent in 1999; among entry-level employees, 67 percent quit within their first ninety days. Store managers and their assistants do not have it much easier. Though better paid, they are expected to work long hours and cover any staffing gaps themselves. The company frequently reassigns young managers from store to store and region to region—an itinerant schedule that can wreak havoc on marriages. Because Wal-Mart has expanded so extensively, many managers find themselves in ruthless competition with other Wal-Marts within the same driving radius—with bonus money and future employment prospects riding on intramural cost competition. Many ambitious store managers seize the challenge, but others end up burned out.

Over the years, the chain has faced its share of lawsuits and investigations challenging its labor practices. Employees have sued Wal-Mart, charging that it has practiced pervasive sex discrimination in promoting staff to management positions, either because of traditionalist ideas about who makes a good manager or because of an economic calculation that young, unattached men would best handle the long hours and reassignments. Store managers have been accused of forcing employees to work off the clock in order to finish a job without earning overtime. One assistant store manager admitted in a deposition that he doctored employees' timecards in order to cut their weekly pay. In 2003 federal immigration officials launched an investigation of the company, code-named Operation Rollback in honor of Wal-Mart's pricing slogan. They discovered that sixty-one Wal-Mart stores in twenty-one states had subcontracted nighttime cleaning work to crews of undocumented Eastern European immigrants with ties to the Russian underworld. Lichtenstein argues that the most egregious violations are committed by harried store managers who face an ultracompetitive business environment. With reordering, stocking and pricing decisions semi-automated and controlled by the home office—Bentonville even controls the thermostat settings at most of its stores—store managers can earn a bonus only by trimming labor costs. But Lichtenstein believes that the vocal opposition at the home office to government regulation of the workplace probably contributes to some of the corner-cutting.

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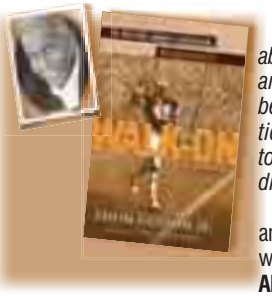

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Lichtenstein has a lucid, plain-speaking prose style, and his book manages to be comprehensive without being repetitive or overlong. The narrative is sometimes hampered by his irritating tendency to pause and note historical parallels that do not enrich the analysis of Wal-Mart. It is unclear why a fatal fire in a Chinese factory needs a side note about the Triangle Shirtwaist tragedy, or how Wal-Mart's system of moving goods around the world is supposed to have "evoked the iron shackles subordinating slave to master," unless it is simply because Lichtenstein calls this a "supply chain." Nonetheless, he does an excellent job of covering a wide range of information from several different fields.

Is a readjustment of the world economy the greatest threat to the Wal-Mart business model?

The Retail Revolution is simultaneously about industrial organization, corporate strategy, labor history, political science and the sociology of mass consumption, and it weaves these subjects together seamlessly. And though on most matters Lichtenstein would side with Wal-Mart's critics, he gives the management its due. In light of what it set out to accomplish, the company has been extremely effective at making its business model work, and he is critical of those who express a hatred of Wal-Mart while giving low-wage copycats such as Target a free pass.

The drawback of this evenhanded approach is that pro-Wal-Mart and anti-Wal-Mart arguments appear side-by-side or in alternate chapters, without the sort of analytical framework that would help one make sense of both. Lichtenstein notes how competition from Wal-Mart and other big-box stores has decimated the main streets of small-town and rural America. According to one study, during the first decade after Wal-Mart's arrival in Iowa in the early 1980s, the state lost 555 groceries, 298 hardware stores, 293 building supply stores, 158 women's apparel shops, 116 drugstores and 153 shoe stores. But he does not explain how, exactly, this impacted the median wage or the price of household essentials, or whether Iowa shoppers were worse off without all those stores. Lichtenstein points out that in many rural settings Wal-Mart stores seem to have replaced Main Street not only as a retail center and major employer but as a community meeting place. "We cry together, laugh together, and share our lives together," explains a testimonial on the company's website. Billie Letts captured this quality of Wal-Mart as what Lichtenstein calls a "de facto town square" in her best-selling novel *Where the Heart Is*, the story of a pregnant teen who finds an extended family and redemption after being abandoned in an Oklahoma store. Indeed, shoppers from the South and West often say they shop at Wal-Mart because it seems "concerned about and actively involved in the community at large."

The analysis is sharper when Lichtenstein moves from home economics to political economy. He describes how Wal-Mart donates money to nonprofit groups and educational institutions that promote free-market public policies, and sponsors a "Students in Free Enterprise" program for students of Southern evangelical colleges. But he also shows how the company lobbies governments to rezone potential store sites and extracts millions of dollars in subsidies in the process. And he details how Wal-Mart employees make considerable use of federal and state welfare provisions. To help them make ends meet, store managers have been known to give their employees directions about how to apply for food stamps, the Children's Health Insurance Program or the Earned Income Tax Credit. Frustrated by the costs that Wal-Mart seemed to be transferring to taxpayers, Maryland passed a bill in 2006 requiring large companies to spend more on healthcare. (The so-called Wal-Mart bill was struck down by a federal court, which argued that it would "preempt" an existing federal law.) Of course, it is hardly unusual for a corporation or its executives to defend free enterprise in theory while taking advantage of whatever opportunities government offers. For his part, former Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott blames the lavishness of welfare benefits themselves for his employees' interest in them: "There are government assistance programs out there that are so lucrative, it's hard to be competitive, and it's expensive to be competitive."

Lichtenstein concludes that the chain may be facing the limits of its expansion and the internal contradictions of its business model. Its move into the Northeast and Pacific Coast has faced significant resistance. Opponents of big-box stores worry that Wal-Mart's huge operations will drive small-town merchants out of business, snarl traffic and despoil the environment. Others consider the store to be the flagship of red-state cultural imperialism. At the same time, the "relentless growth and Darwinian competitiveness" of the big stores "created a world that is increasingly inhospitable to their own success." As other corporations follow the Wal-Mart way, its own customers are increasingly squeezed by the low-wage, part-time economy that Wal-Mart helped to create. The main stress on American family budgets now comes from transportation, healthcare and education—none of which can be reliably purchased at a Supercenter. The squeeze on discretionary consumables was substantial enough that in 2005, CEO Scott hinted that he might even support a higher federally mandated minimum wage so that his customers could afford to buy more stuff. (Though when Congress debated a raise the following year, the company lobbied to kill it.)

We shall see. The expansion of international "supply chains" from Asian factories to American consumers has certainly created global trade imbalances and international currency flows that are not necessarily sustainable over the long run. A readjustment of the world economy, not a slackening demand for inexpensive consumer products, strikes me as the greatest threat to the Wal-Mart business model. And, for its part, the chain is already adapting to new circumstances. In recent years, Wal-Mart has expanded well beyond the borders of North America into Europe, Mexico and Asia. It imports factory goods from China and also operates its own retail stores there. But the stores look very different from their American counterparts. In Kunming, near the border with Myanmar, Wal-Mart rents space inside its store to independent vendors, who pay $1.20 per day to hawk Yunnan coffee, tobacco bongs filled with local rice wine and condiments made from eggplant, soybeans and ginger. The atmosphere is "festival-like, even chaotic," as vendors shout out their wares, sometimes through loudspeakers or while pounding on drums, and customers crowd a stall to fish pears out of a solution of sugar, salt and licorice root—"a Wal-Mart store sans Wal-Martism," according to sociologist Eileen Otis. Another Chinese employee explains his loyalty to the company by suggesting that Sam Walton was, in fact, a student of Chairman Mao who "adopted the revolutionary strategy of 'the countryside encircling the city.'" And so the revolution continues. ■

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CINEMA GUILD

Grégoire Colin as Noé and Mati Diop as Joséphine in *35 Shots of Rum*

Emotional Rescue

by STUART KLAWANS

It came as no surprise that every response to *Inglourious Basterds* came as no surprise. When word goes out that a film will be about the Holocaust but not really, because it's actually about old movies; when it's expected to be a slam-bang adrenaline-powered summer thrill ride but not really, because a major American filmmaker has conceived it, then positions about the picture become so many pre-dug holes, waiting for occupants to tumble in. Merely by calling the film *Inglourious Basterds*—as if its contribution to the vast body of World War II cinema might amount to a couple of misspellings plopped into a title copied from an earlier, cheaper film—Quentin Tarantino promised indelicate pleasures to those who wanted them and pre-emptively shrugged off criticism from those who might want more. It was, in a way, a self-protective move—perhaps even a timid one, coming from a filmmaker who makes his living by a show of boldness; and many more were evident in the trailer, the print ads and the prerelease puff pieces, all calculated to ensure that nothing could be said about *Inglourious Basterds* that *Inglourious Basterds* had not first said about itself.

So I choose to have no opinion about this film. Indifference is the only unforced response left to me.

This isn't to say I'm indifferent to evidence of widespread credulity among those viewers of *Inglourious Basterds*, fans and detractors alike, who accepted the improbable claim that a film can refer to nothing but other films. Nor am I indifferent to a situation in which the entire reception of a film can be produced along with the movie. We have gone beyond cinema's long-familiar modes of culture and commerce: DeMille marketing his epics as a redemption for their own sins, Minnelli both exposing and reveling in the dream factory's artifice, Hitchcock instructing audiences in how to think about a Hitchcock movie, Herschell Gordon Lewis outraging every decent feeling (and so, predictably, attracting a cluck of admirers). With *Inglourious Basterds*, we reach one of those moments that tell us we're in new territory, where unforeseen, uncontrolled reactions are being foreclosed as never before.

This complaint, as I said, is not about the film as such; nor is it meant exclusively about Tarantino. Despite the colossal assertions commonly made about him, he's only one of a great many people who have brought us to this spot. I'm concerned with the aggregate. With some of them coming in from the industry side and others from the side of vulgar Kaelism, they have executed a kind of pincer movement over the past decades, and in so doing have swept us all toward those holes in the ground.

Start with the industry. For the past quarter-century, it has largely devoted itself to expanding the field of in-home entertainment while reducing the role of theatrical exhibition—a development that has required companies to scramble for appropriately scaled economies of production and distribution. The solution has been the institution of a multi-tiered system: big-budget films released onto thousands of screens at once, under the names of major studios; more modestly budgeted pictures given platform release by the studios' specialty divisions and by a surviving handful of midsize distributors; microreleases sent out by small companies for a round of one- or two-week runs at a few theaters dotting the country; and an unquantifiable mass of dumped-onto-digital material.

One consequence of this recently evolved system has been the cretinization of most pictures released by major studios during the first ten months of the year, followed by the release of ostentatiously brow-furrowing pictures for the final two (which are dedicated to awards-qualifying runs). Another consequence has been the invention of a prestigious "independent film" made up of those midbudget pictures that have been chosen for platform release and a publicity push. Because these Mercury Sables of American cinema don't need to make $60 million over the opening weekend, as the Ford Expeditions do, they can afford on average to be less crude and lumbering, and so to some degree represent an alternative. The fact that these movies have been picked out for promotion, rather than being left to clamor for a slot at Anthology Film Archives, suggests that the marketers of "independent film" sense a limit to the public's appetite for alternatives.

Of course, to listen to the industry's shills—entertainment reporters, dutifully crying out the box-office figures—you'd think those carefully respected limits did not exist. In standard accounts, the so-called independents have mounted a critical challenge to the major studios, which are said to resent the lack of respect accorded really lucrative pictures. Yet look at how in mid-November these same shills can announce which pictures will contend for Academy Awards, almost before the screenings have started. The industry is strangely quick to reach consensus. And notice how the same movie titles then show up week after week through February, some representing Fox and some Fox Searchlight. Despite the expansion of choice supposedly fostered by the independents, for four months of the year no more than ten movies are talked about.

If *Inglourious Basterds* should turn out to be one of them, nobody will even know to which tier of the system it belongs. Tarantino and his producers, the Weinstein brothers, are closely identified with the official version of independent film, and the reported budget of $70 million is not huge for an action pic-

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ture starring Brad Pitt. But then, Universal Pictures shares production credit with the Weinstein Company, and the film opened on more than 4,000 screens, making it a toss-up whether *Inglourious Basterds* is also a big-studio release. Judge from this how little friction the top tiers can cause each other and how smoothly Tarantino fits into their economy.

He knows how to work at just the scale the industry needs—and his aesthetic is just right for the notion of film art that has coalesced in America since the 1970s.

I have called this notion vulgar Kaelism, knowing that Pauline Kael would have derided one of its principal tenets: that the movie theater ought to be a refuge from artistic norms and imperatives, where we're all free to revel in trash. "Yes, but," Kael would have said—in fact, did say—and the "but" was the bigger part of her argument. To the vulgar Kaelist, though, movie trash now comes with an imprimatur. Pump into this mindset a few more ideas that have become denatured by constant recirculation—a concept of Hollywood history that grossly overvalues genre filmmaking; a version of auteurism that's little more than hero worship; a definition of "cinematic" that's always about speed and movement, never framing and duration—and you've got the cloudy condensate that now sloshes through the heads of fan boys and pop film critics alike. It might seem at first glance that these people are engaged in the long-established practice of discovering meanings and artistic merits in products that look like mere entertainments—but that's no longer the game. They're fetishizing the authorial look of entertainments that are careful not to be too meaningful.

It's obvious why this attitude toward film would be wonderfully encouraging to a system in which second-tier products must be different but not that different. And the tier system, in turn, has warmly nurtured the vulgar Kaelist attitude, whether it's found in fans, filmmakers or (in Tarantino's case) both.

Let me say again: Tarantino is one participant among a great many in developments that have proceeded haphazardly, often catching up other filmmakers in similar ways, if not always with similar success. (Look at the career of Tom Tykwer, from *Run Lola Run* to this year's dismal *The International*.) But if the route that has taken us here is meandering and muddy, its outcome is plain enough. The number of films in mainstream discussion has shrunk (even while the sum total of films and film chatterers has swollen); and of these few, a significant number will be considered artistically valid precisely because they don't give you much to discuss, other than the skill of a genius director at delivering recognizably movielike sensations.

I would prefer not to be locked inside this closed system, where a thought can't find room enough to move. I bet that's how you feel, too. So let me step outside the bounds by telling you about two films of minor market consequence. Unabashedly artistic, not just in look but sensibility, they nevertheless are more daring than any mid-budget auteurist splatterfest I can name.

Claire Denis's just-released *35 Shots of Rum* takes place on the tracks of Paris's regional train lines, in the rooms of suburban apartment blocks, along streets populated mostly by black and brown French people, between the glances of family members and lovers. Which of the characters are family and which are lovers is not immediately obvious. For a while you just know that these people watch one another, and watch for one another, with patience and concern, overlaying the network of the big city's movement with an intimate and still geometry of their own.

Lionel (Alex Descas) stands beside the tracks from afternoon until nightfall, smoking and watching the trains go by: a middle-aged man with the physique of a heavyweight fighter but not the vanity, solid, pensive, reliable. Joséphine (Mati Diop) rides a train, goes shopping, comes back to her apartment. She's a slim young woman with the long, serenely sad face of an African sculpture; and when Lionel comes home, she hurries to look after him, bringing him his slippers, serving his supper, noticing his every gesture and mood. Round and smooth-haired Gabrielle (Nicole Dogué) has a way of seeming bundled up in herself as she smiles at nothing and waits, and waits, sitting on the stairs in the apartment building or gazing out her window at the tracks. As for Noé (Grégoire Colin), the only pink-skinned character in the film, he shows up in the shadows of the building looking like a threat, with his long, greasy locks and muscle-boy clothes. A close-up, shot from below, lends him an air of menace; but his eyes turn toward Joséphine's door with a look of purest longing.

He is the neighbor who comes and goes, loving Joséphine but never letting her hear it. Gabrielle is the woman who is not Joséphine's mother, though she wishes she were. And Lionel is Joséphine's father—though the way she treats him, you could imagine he's her husband instead. *35 Shots of Rum* is the story of how you gradually figure out how these characters fit together. It's the quiet, profound, beautifully observed story of how they figure themselves out, and get unstuck, and at last find a new configuration for themselves—a little movement.

Denis risks everything on domestic emotions in *35 Shots of Rum*. Jane Campion, by contrast, dares to make emotion strange in the just-released *Bright Star*, her fact-based period drama about the love between a smart young dressmaker, Fanny Brawne, and the frail, impecunious poet who moves in next door, John Keats.

He's played by Ben Whishaw, whose face, when shown from its most characteristic angle, becomes a sliver of moon—waning, most likely, considering the film is concerned with Keats's last years. She is played by Abbie Cornish, who at her most characteristic angle is the moon in full. An artist in her own right, proud to have created the first triple-pleated mushroom collar in Hampstead, Fanny at first shines sociably on Keats, remarking that the quality she most enjoys in writers is wit. "Wit," he grimaces. "Things that make you start, without making you feel." Her initiation by Keats into poetry—his type of poetry—will teach her to feel deeply, until she's dressed in black and howling in a barren woods.

If the theme of *Bright Star* is the realization of oneself in natural emotion, the method is gorgeously unnatural. Campion knows that the early nineteenth century is alien to us and so makes the most of costumes that look like they've devoured the hapless wearers and customs that resemble the rites of far-off tribes. And then, having respected the difference between Fanny Brawne's world and ours, Campion collapses it by bringing out the physical texture of everything, from the touch of fabric against the skin to the peculiar timbre of a voice raised in song. Every sensation seems more immediate than it would be for us today—the quality of the air when the seasons change, the glow of the Vermeer light when it pours through a window. So the characters' education into love becomes immediate for us, too.

Here are two profoundly moving pictures that do leave room for you to think, and discover, and feel for yourself. Their authors, being middle-aged women, have scant chance of being touted as cool. Their artistry, having little commercial oomph, has no chance of being cited by op-ed writers looking to give a little zing to the zeitgeist. All these films do is risk engaging your emotions instead of your memories of other films. They strive to deepen your experience of life, not substitute for it. Entertainment reporters would call them niche films. I'd say that niche is as big as all outdoors. ■

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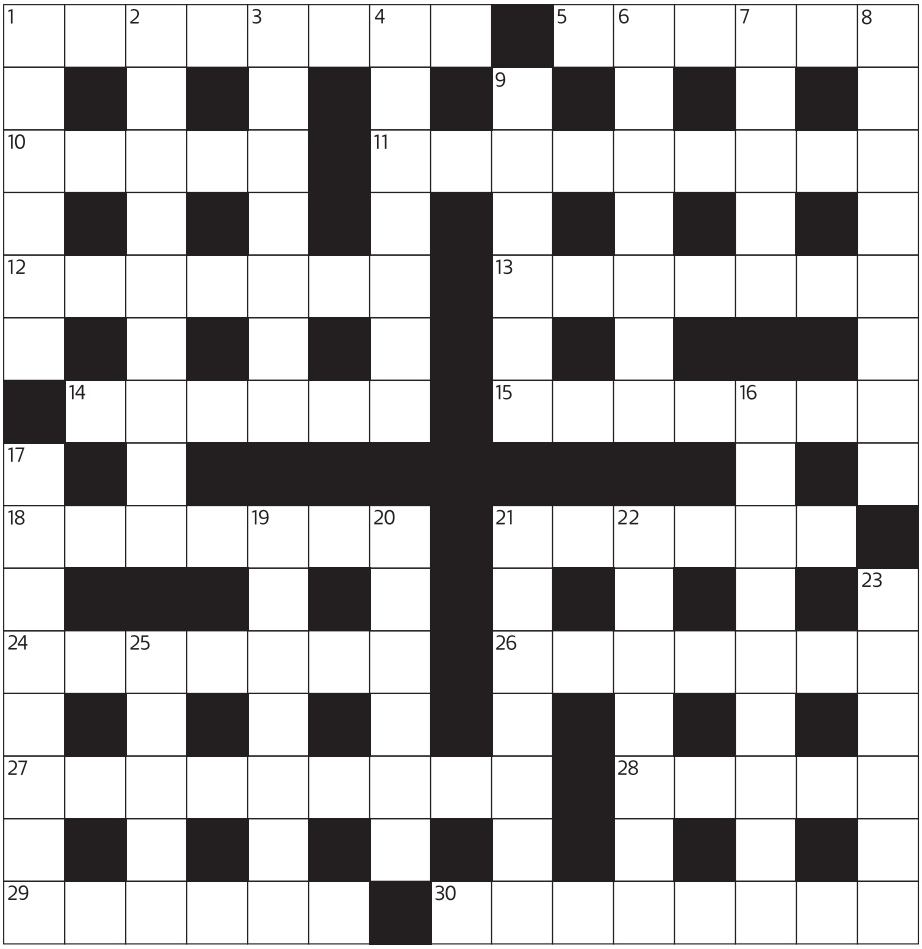

ACROSS

1 Everything is this, as kith and kin can prove. (8)

5 and **30** A sign of fragility or a nickname as an associate of the humanitarian organization? (6,4,4)

10 I swam, leapfrogging to a religious man. (5)

11 A frightening sound by the old buggy could lead you to mine! (5,4)

12 I remember her show—about headgear—but it could make a Brahmin sage. (7)

13 God! Thunder leads to water in France—a pond he lived on! (7)

14 In Bristol, Ed overslept but made it in Ohio and Spain. (You can swear by it!) (6)

15 Done to a T, by the sound of it, and ran around a tee! (7)

18 Mrs. Spock, née Caputo, shows how to disable someone in the Sicilian manner. (7)

21 Five not paid up makes for swearing! (6)

24 This with Charlie is about trips to unwind in the return road. (7)

26 You'll find a silver and agate display on the porch! (7)

27 You could say a snack eaten by the high-level commander is, but it would not be considered very specific. (2,7)

28 As around a contrasting coordinating conjunction, it really comes up against it! (5)

29 A famous climber, Madam Secretary has lost fifty! (6)

30 see 5

DOWN

1 Carry on! Sure, Em! Crazy! Show this to the boss! (6)

2 Reluctant to a portion—it's revolting! (9)

3 Sounds like this'll be Ian's symbol! Ouch! (7)

4 That sassy kid has nothing but six on top, but it's so shaky! (7)

6 Polysaccharide that the little woman might find is gone? Pretty starchy! (7)

7 Delve around right to the point of the slow, sad song. (5)

8 Weight loss? Or the way one elucidates, sometimes longer than we'd like. (8)

9 Tom, this makes it sound like an Englishman talking about love apples, but it's just a saying. (6)

16 Write in—to the Soviet Union, to Louisiana—that they are almost surrounded by water! (9)

17 A little play on this is bad, and makes one quite nervous and flighty. (8)

19 If you can leer crookedly, it's less dirty! (7)

20 It's over, right? Your head knows it's a treat! (6)

21 Six valid, if imperfect, seasons inspired him. (7)

22 If you are on it, you are not a Quaker—or a Shaker—and the awful wrath about Ma's mate makes it worse. (7)

23 It's normal, of course—look, it comes from the land of 10, 12 and 26. (6)

25 Give a leg up to an investor—it's all in play! (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3184

W	A	T	E	R	O	N	T	H	E	■	K	N	E	E
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VOL. CLVIII....No. 35 Natural Science News "For Your Health"

Breaking Research News

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Don't wait for the drug companies to drive the price through the roof; get the benefits of this breakthrough *natural* extract for pennies a day!

BOSTON, MA—Leading medical scientists are learning that resveratrol, a natural substance found in red wine, is rewriting the rules on the science of aging.

Researchers at the **Harvard Medical School** and the **National Institute on Aging** already discovered that the red wine extract offset the negative effects of a high-calorie diet in mice and significantly extends their life span (*NY Times*, Nov 2, 2006). Now, the latest research indicates that resveratrol may been even more powerful than first anticipated.

At this moment, drug companies are rushing to create prescription drugs that mimic the awesome health benefits of this simple natural extract. A leading pharmaceutical company has already spent $760,000,000 on purchasing the research and development.

The powerful secret of tomorrow's anti-aging pill can be yours today.

You may have thought that an anti-aging pill would only be available far into the future. But the effects of resveratrol have been proven as scientific fact... today. Even better, resveratrol is a naturally-occurring substance found in the skin of grapes and red wine, not manufactured in some laboratory. The key to living longer may be found inside your favorite bottle of red wine.

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Resveratrol is conjectured to be a partial explanation for "The French Paradox," the puzzling fact that people in France enjoy a high-fat diet yet suffer less heart disease than Americans and live significantly longer lives (in some cases up to 40%).

Even though French diets are crammed with loads of bread, cheese, rich cream sauces and decadent desserts... the resveratrol in red wine may have acted as their secret weapon. It is thought that the resveratrol protected them against unhealthy triglycerides, high cholesterol and skyrocketing blood pressure.

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Harvard Medical School, Johns Hopkins, Salk Institute and UC Davis Medical Research Proves That Powerful Red Wine Extract Holds the Secret to Living a Longer, Healthier and More Vibrant Life

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